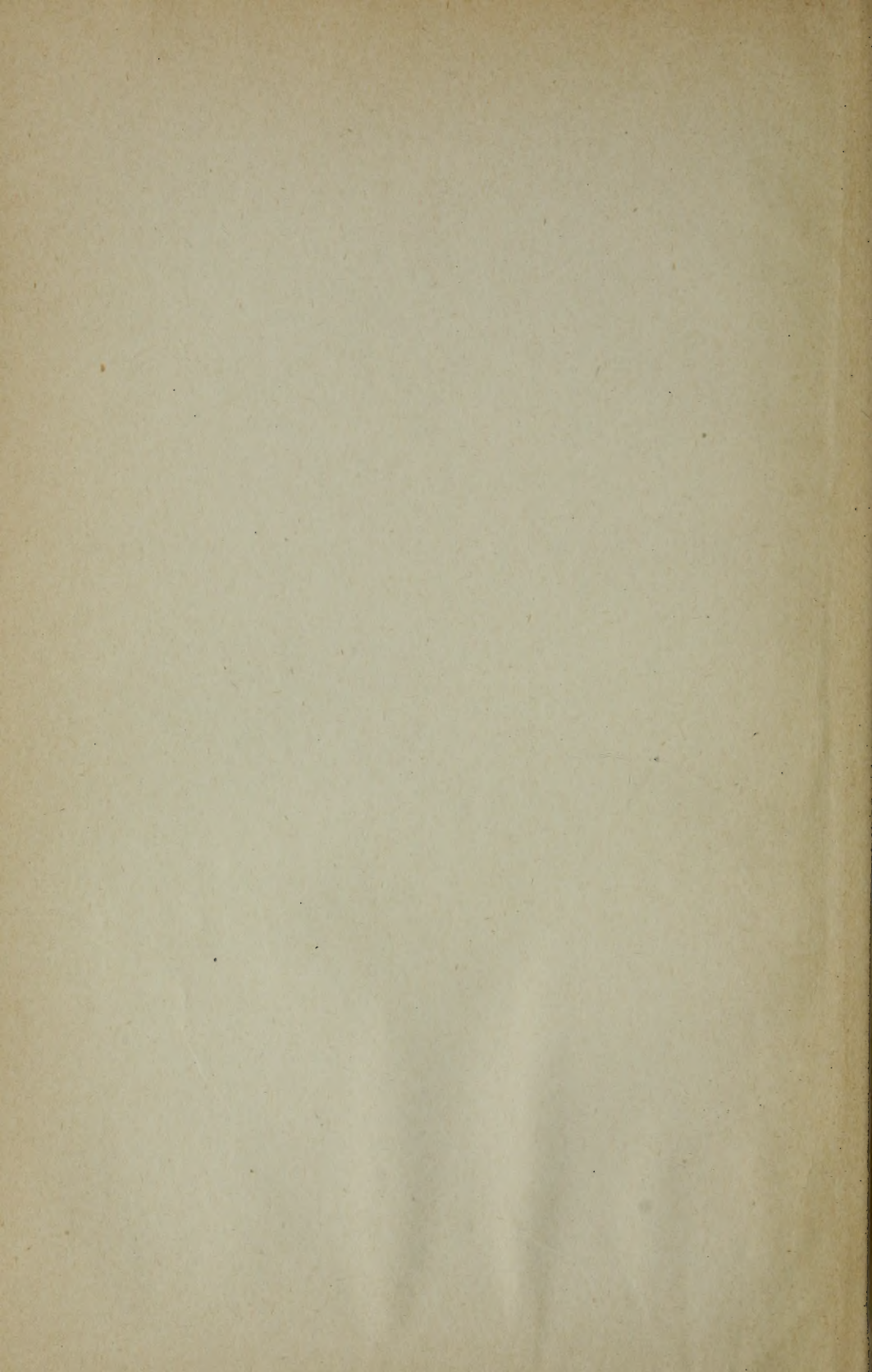
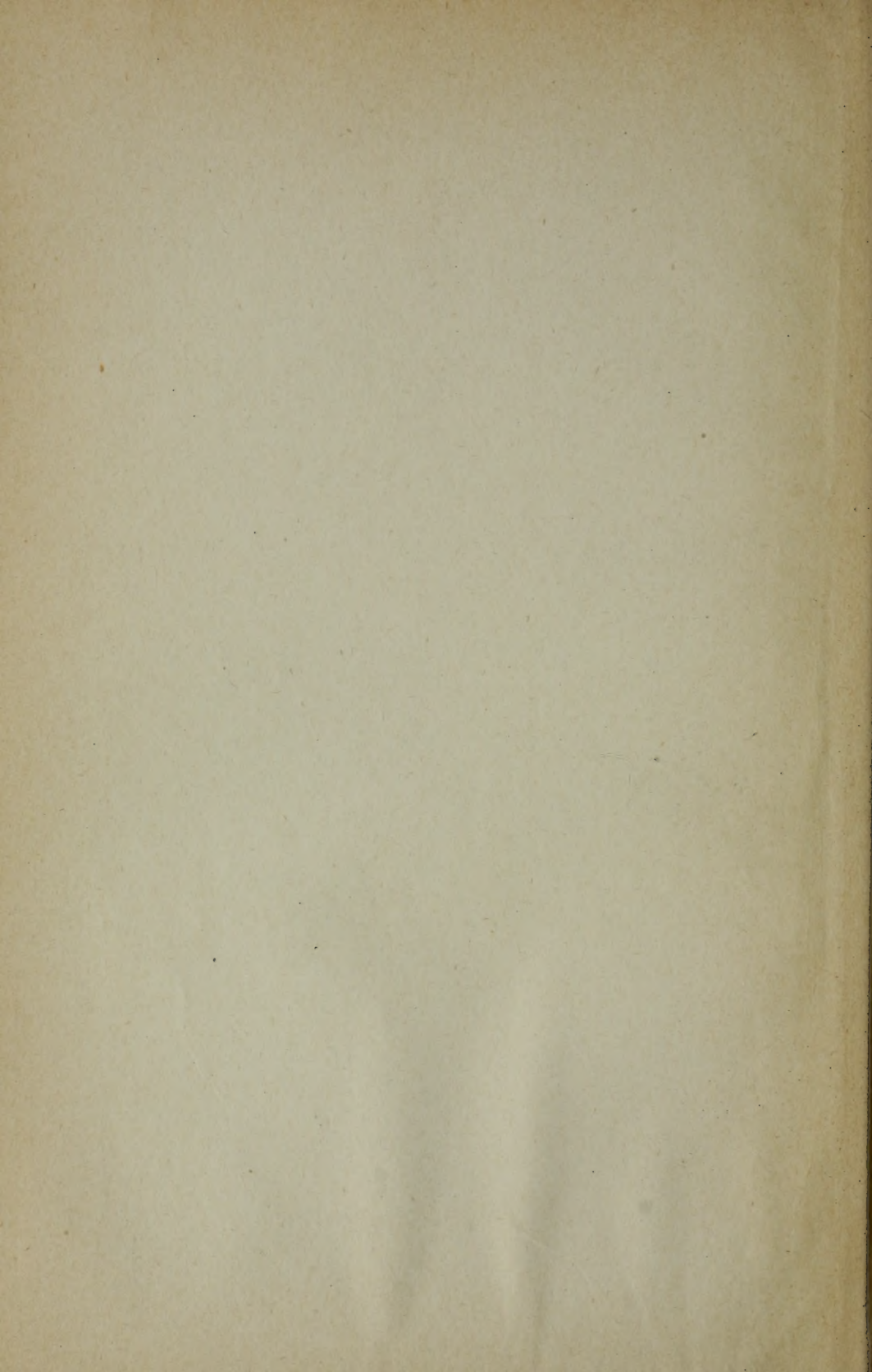


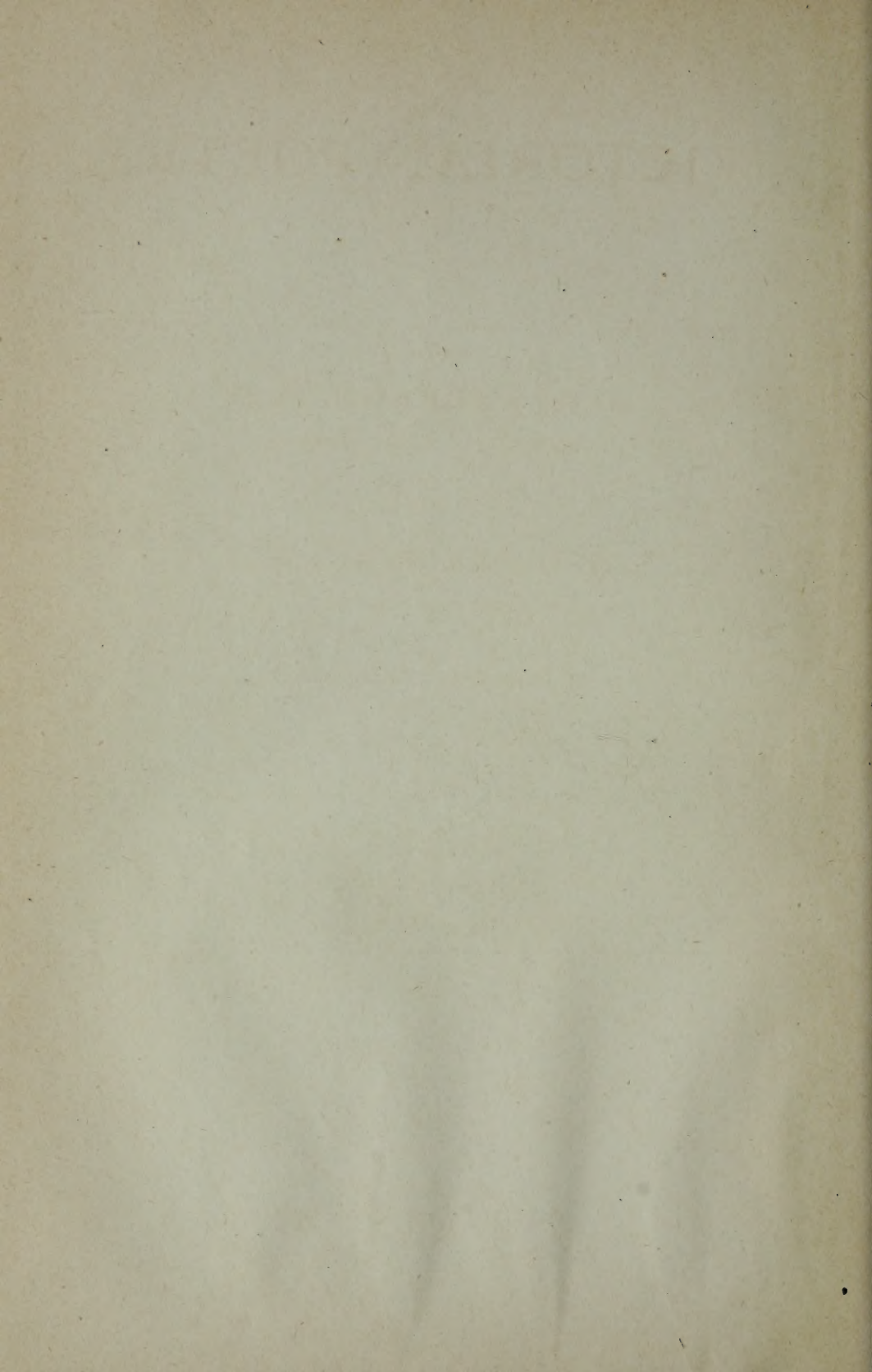
ArB Martin II.

Cambridge

Feb. 5, 1930.







VICTORIAN POETRY

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COLUMBUS, OHIO
R. G. ADAMS & CO.
1928

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PREFACE

This is the second half of the editors' Romantic and Victorian Poetry. The collection was originally conceived as a whole, but has been divided for the sake of smaller volumes.

The editors believe that this collection of Victorian Poetry embodies certain advantages in point of view which have come with the passage of a quarter of the present century. For instance, we now see the work of the poets of the 'nineties (and their immediate predecessors) as one of the most interesting and important periods of the literary history of the nineteenth century. This is the first anthology, the editors believe, to give adequate representation to these poets. Selection of the outstanding figures among them is still to a certain extent a personal matter, and the problem is complicated by copyright restrictions, but the editors believe that they have made a notable addition to the material available for courses in nineteenth century poetry. In this volume will be found a goodly number of poems from the work of W. S. Blunt, W. E. Henley, R. L. Stevenson, Ernest Dowson, Austin Dobson, Robert Bridges, Francis Thompson, A. E. Housman, Arthur Symonds, Rudyard Kipling, and W. B. Yeats. It is not necessary to emphasize the importance of such names.

The editors have also given an unusually large amount of space to the religious and meditative poetry of the Victorian era, so arresting against the background of new and disquieting discoveries in science. Here will be found the goading doubt of Arnold and Clough, the vehement pessimism of James Thomson, the hedonism of the Rubaiyat, the devotion of Christina Rossetti, the philosophic nature poetry of George Meredith, and the mysticism of Coventry Patmore and Francis Thompson. This material, with the addition of Tennyson and Browning, embodies the poetic expression of a significant cycle of religious and poetic thought.

The Pre-Raphaelites, who constitute another important group, are liberally represented; and the logical continuation of their work can be studied in certain poets of the 'nineties.

The addition of a humorous section is an innovation, but the editors rejoice that the opportunity of making it was left to them. Here is laughter that has already lasted half a century and still shows no sign of age, and nonsense carried to a height which deserves recognition as much as unique achievement in other fields.

And yet, with all this expansion of interest, Tennyson and Browning are represented here more fully than in any similar anthology. An amount of poetry is reprinted from these two poets which would in each instance make a fair-sized volume.

One thing about the principle of selection: This is not a golden treasury. It does not aim to include every good poem of the period. A poet has not been included unless he stands for something distinctive, and unless he can be represented by enough poetry to serve as the basis for lecture or discussion. This is a book for teachers and students. In accordance with this principle, poets are often represented, not only by their finest achievements, but also by work that represents their historical development.

It should also be noted that when a poem is accompanied by only one date, that date is to be taken as the date of publication unless of course, there is notice to the contrary.

C. E. A.
M. O. P.

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VICTORIAN POETRY

constructive progress of Time -
Chapel, Mawana.

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

(1809-1892)

CLARIBEL

A MELODY

[1830]

I

WHERE Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall:
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

II

At eye the beetle boometh
Athwart the thicket Tone:
At noon the wild bee hummeth
About the moss'd headstone:
At midnight the moon cometh,
And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
The callow throistle lispeth,
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
The babbling runnel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

MARIANA

[1830]

'Mariana in the moated grange.' — *Measure for Measure*.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the garden-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide:
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew the casement-curtain by,

And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
The cock sung out an hour ere light:
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her: without hope of change,
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the grey-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.

She only said, 'The day is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding grey.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

(3)

Lesson - the open & close vowels are embodied in the line.

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
 The slow clock ticking, and the sound
 Which to the wooing wind aloof
 The poplar made, did all confound
 Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
 Athwart the chambers, and the day
 Was sloping toward his western bower.
 Then, said she, 'I am very dreary,
 He will not come,' she said;
 She wept, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 Oh God, that I were dead!'

SONG

[1830]

I

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours
 Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:
 To himself he talks;
 For at eventide, listening earnestly,
 At his work you may hear him sob and sigh
 In the walks;
 Earthward he boweth the heavy
 stalks
 Of the mouldering flowers:
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock.
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

II

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
 As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
 An hour before death;
 My very heart faints and my whole soul
 grieves
 At the moist rich smell of the rotting
 leaves,
 And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box be-
 neath,
 And the year's last rose.
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

THE KRAKEN

[1830]

BELOW the thunders of the upper deep;
 Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
 His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
 The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
 About his shadowy sides: above him swell
 Huge sponges of millennial growth and
 height;
 And far away into the sickly light,
 From many a wondrous grot and secret
 cell

Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
 Winnow with giant fins the slumbering
 green.

There hath he lain for ages and will lie
 Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,
 Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
 Then once by men and angels to be seen,
 In roaring he shall rise and on the surface
 die.

THE POET

[1830]

THE poet in a golden clime was born,
 With golden stars above;
 Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of
 scorn,
 The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and
 ill,
 He saw thro' his own soul.
 The marvel of the everlasting will,
 An open scroll,

Before him lay: with echoing feet he
 threaded
 The secretest walks of fame:
 The viewless arrows of his thoughts were
 headed
 And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver
 tongue,
 And of so fierce a flight,
 From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
 Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore
 Them earthward till they lit;
 Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field
 flower,
 The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth
 anew
 Where'er they fell, behold,
 Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew
 A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
 The winged shafts of truth,
 To throng with stately blooms the breathing
 spring
 Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with
 beams,
 Tho' one did fling the fire.
 Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many
 dreams
 Of high desire.

*It's ideal part flings abroad the
 winged shafts, not alone of
 beauty, as Keats would have it,
 but of truth.*

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the
world

Like one great garden show'd,
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark
upcurl'd,
Rare sunrise flow'd.

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow,
When rites and forms before his burning
eyes
Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden
robes
Sunn'd by those orient skies;
But round about the circles of the globes
Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was traced in
flame
WISDOM, a name to shake
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.
And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,
And as the lightning to the thunder
Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,
Making earth wonder,

So was their meaning to her words. No
sword
Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with his
word
She shook the world.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

1832. — Revised 1842.]

PART I

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by

To many-tower'd Camelot;

And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,

The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river

Flowing down to Camelot.

Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers

The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot;

But who hath seen her wave her hand? *Clament*
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott? *imaginary*
Island -

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

PART II

THERE she weaves by night and day *a change from*
A magic web with colours gay. *first which*
She has heard a whisper say, *heights*
A curse is on her if she stay *continued*
To look down to Camelot. *the pill.*
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field
Beside remote Shalott,

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily

As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.

As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.

From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse —
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance —
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right —
The leaves upon her falling light —
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:

And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

OENONE

[1832. — Revised 1842]

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the
glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine
to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway
down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them
roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n
ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning: but in
front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful Oenone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round
her neck

Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with
 vine,
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-
 shade
 Sloped downward to her seat from the
 upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
 The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
 Rests like a shadow, and the cicala sleeps.
 The purple flower droops: the golden bee
 Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
 My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
 My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
 And I am all weary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Hear me O Earth, hear me O Hills, O
 Caves
 That house the cold crown'd snake! O
 mountain brooks,
 I am the daughter of a River-God,
 Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
 My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
 Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed;
 A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
 That, while I speak of it, a little while
 My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 I waited underneath the dawning hills,
 Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
 And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:
 Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
 Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd,
 white-hooved,
 Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:
 Far up the solitary morning smote
 The streaks of virgin snow. With down-
 dropt eyes
 I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
 Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard
 skin
 Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny
 hair
 Cluster'd about his temples like a God's;
 And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow
 brightens
 When the wind blows the foam, and all
 my heart
 Went forth to embrace him coming ere
 he came.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 He smiled, and opening out his milk-white
 palm
 Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,

That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
 And listen'd, the full-flowing river of
 speech
 Came down upon my heart.

"My own Oenone,
 Beautiful-brow'd Oenone, my own soul,
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind
 ingrav'n
 'For the most fair,' would seem to award
 it thine,
 As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
 The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
 Of movement, and the charm of married
 brows."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
 And added "This was cast upon the board,
 When all the full-faced presence of the
 Gods
 Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
 Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere
 due:
 But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
 Delivering, that to me, by common voice
 Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
 Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
 This meed of fairest. Thou, within the
 cave
 Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
 Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 It was the deep midnight: one silvery
 cloud
 Had lost his way between the piney sides
 Of this long glen. Then to the bower they
 came,
 Naked they came to that smooth-swarded
 bower,
 And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
 Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
 Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
 And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
 This way and that, in many a wild festoon
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
 With bunch and berry and flower thro'
 and thro'.

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
 And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and
 lean'd
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to
 whom
 Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that
 grows
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the
 Gods
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule
 Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue

Wherewith to embellish state, "from many
 a vale
 And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with
 corn,
 Or labour'd mines undrainable of ore.
 Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and
 toll,
 From many an inland town and haven
 large,
 Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing
 citadel
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Still she spake on and still she spake of
 power,
 "Which in all action is the end of all;
 Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
 And throned of wisdom—from all neigh-
 bour crowns
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon
 from me,
 From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee
 king-born,
 A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
 Should come most welcome, seeing men,
 in power
 Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
 Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
 Above the thunder, with undying bliss
 In knowledge of their own supremacy."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
 Out at arm's-length, so much the thought
 of power
 Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she
 stood
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
 O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
 The while, above, her full and earnest eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-
 control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign
 power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncall'd for), but to live by
 law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of conse-
 quence."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Again she said: "I woo thee not with
 gifts.
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed
 Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
 Unbiass'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to
 thee,
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
 To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown
 will,
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
 Commensure perfect freedom."

'Here she ceased,
 And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, "O Paris,
 Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is
 me!

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Italian Aphrodite beautiful,
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian
 wells,
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep
 hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder: from the violets her light
 foot
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded
 form
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she
 moved.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
 Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in
 Greece,"
 She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for
 fear:
 But when I look'd, Paris had raised his
 arm,
 And I beheld great Herë's angry eyes,
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower;
 And from that time to this I am alone,
 And I shall be alone until I die.

'Yet, mother Ida, hearken ere I die.
 Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
 My love hath told me so a thousand times.
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
 Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most lov-
 ing is she?
 Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my
 arms

Were wound about thee, and my hot lips
 prest
 Close, close to thine in that quick-falling
 dew
 Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
 Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
 My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy
 ledge

High over the blue gorge, and all between
 The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
 Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
 Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark
 morn

The panther's roar came muffled, while I
 sat

Low in the valley. Never, never more
 Shall lone Oenone see the morning mist
 Sweep thro' them; never see them over'aid
 With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
 Between the loud stream and the trembling
 stars.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,
 Among the fragments tumbled from the
 glens,

Or the dry thickets, I could meet with
 her,

The Abominable, that uninvited came
 Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall,
 And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
 And bred this change; that I might speak
 my mind,

And tell her to her face how much I hate
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and
 men.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand
 times;

In this green valley, under this green hill,
 Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this
 stone?

Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?

O happy tears, and how unlike to these!

O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my
 face?

O happy earth, how canst thou bear my
 weight?

O death, death, death, thou ever-floating
 cloud,

There are enough unhappy on this earth,
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
 I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
 Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
 Do shape themselves within me, more and
 more,

Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost
 hills,

Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
 Conjectures of the features of her child
 Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder
 comes

Across me: never child be born of me,
 Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
 Lest their shrill happy laughter come to
 me

Walking the cold and starless road of
 Death

Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
 With the Greek woman. I will rise and
 go

Down into Troy, and ere the stars come
 forth

Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she
 says

A fire dances before her, and a sound
 Rings ever in her ears of armed men.

What this may be I know not, but I
 know

That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
 All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

THE PALACE OF ART

[1832. — Revised 1842]

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
 Wherein at ease for ay to dwell.

I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse,
 Dear soul, for all is well.'

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd
 brass,

I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
 From level meadow-bases of deep grass
 Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf

The rock rose clear, or winding stair;
 My soul would live alone unto herself

In her high palace there.

And 'while the world runs round and
 round,' I said,

'Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
 Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast
 shade

Sleeps on his luminous ring.'

To which my soul made answer readily:
 'Trust me, in bliss I shal' abide

In this great mansion, that is built for me,
 So royal-rich and wide.'

* * * *

Revised a great improvement.

Four courts I made, East, West and South
and North,
In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
The golden gorge of dragons spouted
forth
A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran
a row
Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
That lent broad verge to distant lands,
Far as the wild swan wings, to where the
sky
Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one
swell
Across the mountain stream'd below
In misty folds, that floating as they fell
Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd,
To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, 'And who shall gaze
upon
My palace with unblinded eyes,
While this great bow will waver in the sun,
And that sweet incense rise?'

For that sweet incense rose and never
fail'd,
And, while day sank or mounted higher,
The light aerial gallery, golden-rail'd,
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd and
traced,
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
From shadow'd grots of arches interlaced,
And tipt with frost-like spires.

* * * *

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
Thro' which the livelong day my soul did
pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace
stood,
All various, each a perfect whole
From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and
blue,
Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter
blew
His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of
sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry waves.
You seem'd to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing
caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding
low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones
and slags,
Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
All barr'd with long white cloud the scorn-
ful crags,
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—grey twilight
pour'd
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order
stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was
there,
Not less than truth design'd.

* * * *

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonix
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
An angel look'd at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,
A group of Hours bow'd to see
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watch'd by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw
The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian king
to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd
A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne:
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one hand
grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky
Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, design'd.

* * * *

Then in the towers I placed great bells
that swung,

Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I
hung

The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd
his song,

And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every
land

So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and
stings;

Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or
bind

All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man
declined,
And trusted any cure:

But over these she trod: and those great
bells

Began to chime. She took her throne:
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost Oriels' colour'd flame
Two godlike faces gazed below;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion
were

Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd
fair

In diverse raiment strange:

Thro' which the lights, rose, amber, emer-
ald, blue,

Flush'd in her temples and her eyes,
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon,
drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong

Her low preamble all alone,

More than my soul to hear her echo'd song
Throb thro' the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful
mirth,

Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible
earth,

Lord of the senses five;

Communing with herself: 'All these are
mine,

And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me.' She—when young night
divine

Crown'd dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—

Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and
cried,

'I marvel if my still delight

In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,
Be flatter'd to the height.

'O all things fair to sate my various eyes!

O shapes and hues that please me well!

O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

'O God-like isolation which art mine,

I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves
of swine

That range on yonder plain.

'In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.'

Then of the moral instinct would she prate,
And of the rising from the dead,

As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate;
And at the last she said:

First of a catalogue of imaginary persons.

'I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.'

* * * *

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prosper'd: so three
years

She prosper'd: on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his
ears,

Struck thro' with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of Personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she
turn'd her sight,

The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote 'Mene, mene,' and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that
mood

Laughter at her self-scorn.

'What! is not this my place of strength,'
she said,

'My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were
laid

Since my first memory?'

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of
blood,

And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of
flame,

And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she
came,

That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem'd my soul,
'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of
sand;

Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from
the land

Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw

The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had
curl'd,

'No voice,' she shriek'd in that lone hall,
'No voice breaks thro' the stillness of this
world:

One deep, deep silence all!'

She, mouldering with the dull earth's
mouldering sod,

Inwraught tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
And all alone in crime:

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
With blackness as a solid wall,
Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound
Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking
slow,

In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, 'I have
found

A new land, but I die.'

She howl'd aloud, 'I am on fire within.
There comes no murmur of reply.

What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die?'

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.

'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,
'Where I may mourn and pray.

'Yet pull not down my palace towers, that
are

So lightly, beautifully built:
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.'

THE LOTOS-EATERS

[1832. — Revised 1842]

'COURAGE!' he said, and pointed toward the
land

'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward
soon.'

In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.

repetition to give language

building

*mood of fatigue, & yearning
for rest.*

Straining for music
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
 Slow dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
 And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
 Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
 From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
 Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
 Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
 In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale;
 A land where all things always seem'd the same!
 And round about the keel with faces pale,
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
 To each, but whoso did receive of them,
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
 On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
 And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
 And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
 Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.

Then some one said, 'We will return no more;'

Answering the first
 And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
 Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.'

CHORIC SONG

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
 Here are cool mosses deep,
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
 While all things else have rest from weariness?
 All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
 Nor ever fold our wings,
 And cease from wanderings,
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
 Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
 'There is no joy but calm!'
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
 Drops in a silent autumn night.
 All its allotted length of days,
 The flower ripens in its place.
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
 Death is the end of life; ah, why
 Should life all labour be?

Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last?
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the
 grave
 In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or
 dreamful ease.

v

How sweet it were, hearing the downward
 stream,
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem
 Falling asleep in a half-dream!
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber
 light,
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on
 the height;
 To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
 Eating the Lotos day by day,
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
 And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
 To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
 To the influence of mild-minded melan-
 choly;
 To muse and brood and live again in mem-
 ory,
 With those old faces of our infancy
 Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
 Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an
 urn of brass!

vi

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
 And dear the last embraces of our wives
 And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd
 change;
 For surely now our household hearths are
 cold:
 Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble
 joy.
 Or else the island princes over-bold
 Have eat our substance, and the minstrel
 sings
 Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
 And our great deeds, as half-forgotten
 things.
 Is there confusion in the little isle?
 Let what is broken so remain.
 The Gods are hard to reconcile:
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There is confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath,
 Sore tasks to hearts worn out with many
 wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the
 pilot-stars.

vii

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blow-
 ing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelids still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing
 slowly
 His waters from the purple hill —
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined
 vine —
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath di-
 vine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling
 brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out be-
 neath the pine.

viii

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
 All day the wind breathes low with mel-
 lower tone:
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yel-
 low Lotos-dust is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of
 motion ~~we~~,
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when
 the surge was seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his
 foam-fountains in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an
 equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie
 reclined
 On the hills like Gods together, careless of
 mankind.
 For they lie beside their nectar, and the
 bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the
 clouds are lightly curl'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with
 the gleaming world:
 Where they smile in secret, looking over
 wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,
 roaring deeps and fiery sands,
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and
 sinking ships, and praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred in
 a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient
 tale of wrong,
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words
 are strong;
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men that
 cleave the soil,
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with
 enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and
 wine and oil;

Till they perish and they suffer—some,
 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian
 valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of
 asphodel.
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than
 toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind
 and wave and oar;
 Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not
 wander more.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

[1832. — Revised 1842]

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
'The Legend of Good Women,' long ago
 Sung by the morning star of song, who
 made
 His music heard below;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet
 breath
 Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth
 With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art
 Held me above the subject, as strong
 gales
 Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho' my
 heart,
 Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In
 every land
 I saw, wherever light illumineth,
 Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
 The downward slope to death.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient song
 Peopled the hollow dark, like burning
 stars,
 And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and
 wrong,
 And trumpets blown for wars;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging
 hoofs:
 And I saw crowds in column'd sanctu-
 aries;
 And forms that pass'd at windows and on
 roofs
 Of marble palaces;

Corpses across the threshold; heroes tall
 Dislodging pinnacle and parapet
 Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall;
 Lances in ambush set;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with
 heated blasts
 That run before the fluttering tongues of
 fire;

White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and
 masts,
 And ever climbing higher;

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen
 plates,
 Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers
 woes,
 Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron
 grates,
 And hush'd seraglios.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when
 to land
 Bluster the winds and tides the self-
 same way,
 Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level
 sand,
 Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,
 Resolved on noble things, and strove to
 speak,
 As when a great thought strikes along the
 brain,
 And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
 A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,
 That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town;
 And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing
 thought
 Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and
 did creep
 Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd,
 and brought
 Into the gulfs of sleep.

At last methought that I had wander'd far
 In an old wood: fresh-wash'd in coolest
 dew,
 The maiden splendours of the morning
 star
 Shook in the steadfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and lean
 Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
 Their broad curved branches, fledged with
 clearest green,
 New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey
 done,
 And with dead lips smiled at the twilight
 plain,
 Half-fall'n across the threshold of the
 sun,
 Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead
 air,
 Not any song of bird or sound of rill;
 Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
 Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine
 turn'd
 Their humid arms festooning tree to
 tree,
 And at the root thro' lush green grasses
 burn'd
 The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I
 knew
 The tearful glimmer of the languid
 dawn
 On those long, rank, dark wood-walks
 drench'd in dew,
 Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
 Pour'd back into my empty soul and
 frame
 The times when I remember to have been
 Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone
 Thrill'd thro' mine ears in that unblissful
 clime,
 'Pass freely thro': the wood is all thine
 own,
 Until the end of time.'

At length I saw a lady within call,
 Still than chisell'd marble, standing
 there;
 A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
 And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with sur-
 prise
 Froze my swift speech: she turning on
 my face
 The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
 Spoke slowly in her place.

'I had great beauty: ask thou not my name:
 No one can be more wise than destiny.
 Many drew swords and died. Where'er I
 came
 I brought calamity.'

'No marvel, sovereign lady: in fair field
 Myself for such a face had boldly died,
 I answer'd free; and turning I appeal'd
 To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks
 averse,
 To her full height her stately stature
 draws;
 'My youth,' she said, 'was blasted with a
 curse:

This woman was the cause.

I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
 Which yet to name my spirit loathes
 and fears:

My father held his hand upon his face;
 I, blinded with my tears,

Still strove to speak: my voice was thick
 with sighs
 As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
 The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish
 eyes,
 Waiting to see me die.

The high masts flicker'd as they lay afloat;
 The crowds, the temples, waver'd, and the
 shore;
 The bright death quiver'd at the victim's
 throat;
 Touch'd; and I knew no more.'

Whereto the other with a downward brow:
 'I would the white cold heavy-plunging
 foam,
 Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep
 below,
 Then when I left my home.'

Her slow full words sank thro' the silence
 drear,
 As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea:
 Sudden I heard a voice that cried, 'Come
 here,
 That I may look on thee.'

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,
 One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd;
 A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold
 black eyes,
 Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:
 'I govern'd men by change, and so I
 sway'd
 All moods. 'Tis long since I have seen a
 man.

Once, like the moon, I made

'The ever-shifting currents of the blood
 According to my humour ebb and flow.
 I have no men to govern in this wood:
 That makes my only woe.

'Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not
 bend
 One will; nor tame and tutor with mine
 eye

That dull cold-blooded Caesar. Prythee,
 friend,
 Where is Mark Antony?

'The man, my lover, with whom I rode
 sublime

On Fortune's neck: we sat as God by
 God:

The Nilus would have risen before his
 time
 And flooded at our nod.

'We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and
 lit
 Lamps which outburn'd Canopus. O my
 life

In Egypt! O the dalliance and the wit,
 The flattery and the strife,

'And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's
alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die!

'And there he died: and when I heard my
name
Sigh'd forth with life I would not brook
my fear
Of the other: with a worm I balk'd his
fame.
What else was left? look here!

(With that she tore her robe apart, and
half
The polish'd argent of her breast to
sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a
laugh,
Showing the aspick's bite.)

'I died a Queen. The Roman soldier
found
Me lying dead, my crown about my
brows,
A name for ever!—lying robed and
crown'd,
Worthy a Roman spouse.'

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down and
glance
From tone to tone, and glided thro' all
change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for de-
light;
Because with sudden motion from the
ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with
light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest
darts;
As once they drew into two burning
rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty
hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming thro' the
lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird,
That claps his wings at dawn.

'The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and
soon,
Sound all night long, in falling thro' the
dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

'The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with
beams divine:
All night the splinter'd crags that wall the
dell
With spires of silver shine.'

As one that museth where broad sunshine
laves
The lawn by some cathedral, thro' the
door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and
tied
To where he stands,—so stood I, when
that flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow;

The daughter of the warrior Gi'eadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome
light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth: 'Heaven heads the
count of crimes
With that wild oath.' She render'd an-
swer high:
'Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

'Single I grew, like some green plant, whose
root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower; but ere my flower to
fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

'My God, my land, my father—these did
move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature
gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of
love
Down to a silent grave.

'And I went mourning, "No fair Hebrew
boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame
among
The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all
joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

'Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that
glow
Beneath the battled tower.

'The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by
one,
Or, from the darken'd glen,

'Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief be-
came
A solemn scorn of ills.

'When the next moon was roll'd into the
sky,
Strength came to me that equal'd my
desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

'It comforts me in this one thought to
dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

'Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from
Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth.' Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips: she left me where I
stood:
'Glory to God,' she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

Losing her carol I stood pensively,
As one that from a casement leans his
head,
When midnight bells cease ringing sud-
denly,
And the old year is dead.

'Alas! alas!' a low voice, full of care.
Murmur'd beside me: 'Turn and look on
me:
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.

'Would I had been some maiden coarse and
poor!
O me, that I should ever see the light!
Those dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night.'

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and
trust:
To whom the Egyptian: 'O, you tamely
died!
You should have clung to Fulvia's waist,
and thrust
The dagger thro' her side.'

With that sharp sound the white dawn's
creeping beams,
Stol'n to my brain, dissolved the mystery
Of folded sleep. The captain of my dreams
Ruled in the eastern sky.

Morn broaden'd on the borders of the dark,
Ere I saw her, who clasp'd in her last
trance
Her murder'd father's head, or Joan of
Arc,
A light of ancient France;

Or her, who knew that Love can vanquish
Death,
Who kneeling, with one arm about her
king,
Drew forth the poison with her balmy
breath,
Sweet as new buds in Spring.

No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden
ore
That glimpses, moving up, than I from
sleep
To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what
dull pain
Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to
strike
Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been
blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years,
In yearnings that can never be express'd
By signs or groans or tears;

Because all words, tho' cull'd with choicest
art,
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

TO J. S.

[1833]

THE wind, that beats the mountain, blows
More softly round the open wold,
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

And me this knowledge bolder made,
Or else I had not dared to flow
In these words toward you, and invade
Even with a verse your holy woe.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,
Fall into shadow, soonest lost:
Those we love first are taken first.

God gives us love. Something to love
 He lends us; but, when love is grown
 To ripeness, that on which it throve
 Falls off, and love is left alone.

This is the curse of time. Alas!
 In grief I am not all unlearn'd;
 Once thro' mine own doors Death did pass;
 One went, who never hath return'd.

He will not smile — not speak to me
 Once more. Two years his chair is seen
 Empty before us. That was he
 Without whose life I had not been.

Your loss is rarer; for this star
 Rose with you thro' a little arc
 Of heaven, nor having wander'd far
 Shot on the sudden into dark.

I knew your brother: his mute dust
 I honour and his living worth:
 A man more pure and bold and just
 Was never born into the earth.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,
 Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep.
 Great Nature is more wise than I:
 I will not tell you not to weep.

And tho' mine own eyes fill with dew,
 Drawn from the spirit thro' the brain,
 I will not even preach to you,
 'Weep, weeping dulls the inward pain.'

Let Grief be her own mistress still.
 She loveth her own anguish deep
 More than much pleasure. Let her will
 Be done — to weep or not to weep.

I will not say 'God's ordinance
 Of Death is blown in every wind;'
 For that is not a common chance
 That takes away a noble mind.

His memory long will live alone
 In all our hearts, as mournful light
 That broods above the fallen sun,
 And dwells in heaven half the night.

Vain solace! Memory standing near
 Cast down her eyes, and in her throat
 Her voice seem'd distant, and a tear
 Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,
 How *should* I soothe you anyway,
 Who miss the brother of your youth?
 Yet something I did wish to say:

For he too was a friend to me:
 Both are my friends, and my true breast
 Bleedeth for both; yet it may be
 That only silence suiteth best.

Words weaker than your grief would make
 Grief more. 'Twere better I should
 cease;

Although myself could almost take
 The place of him that sleeps in peace.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace:
 Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,
 While the stars burn, the moons increase,
 And the great ages onward roll.

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.
 Nothing comes to thee new or strange.
 Sleep full of rest from head to feet;
 Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

ST. AGNES' EVE

[1837]

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows
 Are sparkling to the moon:
 My breath to heaven like vapour goes:
 May my soul follow soon!
 The shadows of the convent-towers
 Slant down the snowy sward,
 Still creeping with the creeping hours
 That lead me to my Lord:
 Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
 As are the frosty skies,
 Or this first snowdrop of the year
 That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
 To yonder shining ground;
 As this pale taper's earthly spark,
 To yonder argent round;
 So shows my soul before the Lamb,
 My spirit before Thee;
 So in mine earthly house I am,
 To that I hope to be.
 Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
 Thro' all yon starlight keen,
 Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
 In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;
 The flashes come and go;
 All heaven bursts her starry floors,
 And strows her lights below,
 And deepens on and up! the gates
 Roll back, and far within
 For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
 To make me pure of sin.
 The sabbaths of Eternity,
 One sabbath deep and wide —
 A light upon the shining sea —
 The Bridegroom with his bride!

YOU ASK ME, WHY, THO' ILL AT EASE

[Composed c. 1833. — Published 1842]

You ask me, why, tho' ill at ease,
 Within this region I subsist,
 Whose spirits falter in the mist,
 And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose,
The land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will;

A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom broadens slowly down
From precedent to precedent:

Where faction seldom gathers head,
But by degrees to fullness wrought,
The strength of some diffusive thought
Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
Opinion, and induce a time
When single thought is civil crime,
And individual freedom mute;

Tho' Power should make from land to land
The name of Britain trebly great —
Tho' every channel of the State
Should fill and choke with golden sand —

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
Wild wind! I seek a warmer sky,
And wind I will see before I die
The palms and temples of the South.

OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS

[Composed c. 1833. — Published 1842]

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet:
Above her shook the starry lights:
She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
But, fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro' town and field
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men reveal'd
The fullness of her face —

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown:

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our
dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes!

LOVE THOU THY LAND, WITH LOVE FAR-BROUGHT

[Composed c. 1833. — Published 1842]

Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Thro' future time by power of thought.

True love turn'd round on fixed poles,
Love, that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,
Nor feed with crude imaginings
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings,
That every sophister can lime.

Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for day,
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

Watch what main-currents draw the years:
Cut Prejudice against the grain:
But gentle words are always gain:
Regard the weakness of thy peers:

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pension, neither count on praise:
It grows to guerdon after-days:
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch;

Not clinging to some ancient saw;
Not master'd by some modern term;
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm:
And in its season bring the law;

That from Discussion's lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly, binds —
Set in all lights by many minds,
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro' many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying, hard to shape in act;
For all the past of Time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The Spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits
Completion in a painful school;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,
But vague in vapour, hard to mark;
And round them sea and air are dark
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,
Is bodied forth the second whole.
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head;
To shame the boast so often made,
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like Peace;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay,
Would serve his kind in deed and word,
Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke
From either side, nor veil his eyes:
And if some dreadful need should rise
Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke:

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,
As we bear blossom of the dead;
Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed
Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

ULYSSES

[1842]

*Desired
Amplifier*

Ir little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren
craggs,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and
dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know
not me.

*Ulysses embodies the eternal
craving for action & new experience.*

I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with
those

That loved me, and alone; on shore, and
when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of
men

And manners, climates, councils, govern-
ments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose mar-
gin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled
on life

Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard
myself,

And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human
thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make
mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I
mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her
sail:

There gloom the dark broad seas. My
mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and
thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I
are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs:
the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come,
my friends,

'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose
holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us
down:

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old
days

Moved earth and heaven; that which we
are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong
in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

LOCKSLEY HALL *last of the series*

[1842]

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as
yet 'tis early morn:

Leave me here, and when you want me,
sound upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old,
the curlews call,

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying
over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance over-
looks the sandy tracts,

And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into
cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement,
ere I went to rest,

Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly
to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising
thro' the mellow shade,

Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in
a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourish-
ing a youth sublime

With the fairy tales of science, and the
long result of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruit-
ful land reposed;

When I clung to all the present for the
promise that it closed:

When I dipt into the future far as human
eye could see;

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the
wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon
the robin's breast;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets
himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the
burnish'd dove;

In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly
turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than
should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a
mute observance hung.

And I said, 'My cousin Amy, speak, and
speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my
being sets to thee.'

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a
colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the
northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with
a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark
of hazel eyes—

Saying, 'I have hid my feelings, fearing
they should do me wrong;'

Saying, 'Dost thou love me, cousin?' weep-
ing, 'I have loved thee long.'

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd
it in his glowing hands;

Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself
in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote
on all the chords with might;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling,
pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we
hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with
the fullness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we
watch the stately ships,

And our spirits rush'd together at the
touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy,
mine no more!

O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the
barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than
all songs have sung,

Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to
a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having
known me—to decline

On a range of lower feelings and a nar-
rower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his
level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to
sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art
mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have
weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall
have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little
dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think
not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take
his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain
is overwrought:
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch
him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things
to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I
slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from
the heart's disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in
a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against
the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us
from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from
honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd
forehead of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—
Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee
more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which
bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my
heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such
length of years should come
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the
clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the rec-
ords of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her,
as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did
she speak and move:
Such a one do I remember, whom to look
at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her
for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly: love is
love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this
is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is re-
membering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest
thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the
rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou
art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and
the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, point-
ing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the
tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whis-
per'd by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the
ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient
kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get
thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a
tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain
thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest
rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from
the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a
deariness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his: it will be
worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy
petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching
down a daughter's heart.

'They were dangerous guides the feelings
—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffer'd—Perish
in thy self-contentment!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! where-
fore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I
wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, light-
ing upon days like these?
Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens
but to golden keys.

- Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the
markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy: what is that
which I should do?
- I had been content to perish, falling on the
foeman's ground,
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and
the winds are laid with sound.
- But the jingling of the guinea helps the
hurt that Honour feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling
at each other's heels.
- Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn
that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou
wondrous Mother-Age!
- Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt
before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the
tumult of my life;
- Yearning for the large excitement that
the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he
leaves his father's field.
- And at night along the dusky highway near
and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring
like a dreary dawn;
- And his spirit leaps within him to be gone
before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among
the throngs of men;
- Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever
reaping something new:
That which they have done but earnest of
the things that they shall do:
- For I dipt into the future, far as human
eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the
wonder that would be;
- Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argo-
sies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down
with costly bales;
- Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and
there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in
the central blue;
- Far along the world-wide whisper of the
south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging
thro' the thunder-storm;
- Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and
the battle-flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation
of the world.
- There the common sense of most shall hold
a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in
universal law.
- So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping
thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me
with the jaundiced eye;
- Eye, to which all order festers, all things
here are out of joint:
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping
on from point to point;
- Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion,
creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a
slowly-dying fire.
- Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increas-
ing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with
the process of the suns.
- What is that to him that reaps not harvest
of his youthful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for
ever like a boy's?
- Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and
I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world
is more and more.
- Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and
he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the
stillness of his rest.
- Hark, my merry comrades call me, sound-
ing on the bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a
target for their scorn:
- Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on
such a moulder'd string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have
loved so slight a thing.
- Weakness to be wroth with weakness!
woman's pleasure, woman's pain —
Nature made them blinder motions bounded
in a shallower brain:
- Woman is the lesser man, and all thy
passions, match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as
water unto wine —
- Here at least, where nature sickens, noth-
ing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my
life began to beat;
- Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my
father evil-starr'd; —
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish
uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to
wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways
of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow
moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in
cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an
European flag,

Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland,
swings the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs
the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple
spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more
than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the
thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall
have scope and breathing-space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall
rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive,
and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl
their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap
the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over mis-
erable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I
know my words are wild,
But I count the grey barbarian lower
than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant
of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a
beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me
were sun or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost
files of time—

I that rather held it better men should
perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like
Joshua's moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward,
forward let us range.
Let the great world spin for ever down
the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep
into the younger day:
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle
of Cathay,

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help
me as when life begun:
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the
lightnings, weigh the Sun—

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit
hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all
my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell
to Locksley Hall!

Now for me the woods may wither, now
for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blacken-
ing over heath andholt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its
breast a thunder-bolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or
hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring sea-
ward, and I go.

SIR GALAHAD

[1842]

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel:
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns;
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;

I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.

A gentle sound, an awful light!

Three angels bear the holy Grail:
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.

Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail;

But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swell up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
'O just and faithful knight of God!
Ride on! the prize is near.'
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the holy Grail.

MOVE EASTWARD, HAPPY EARTH

[1842]

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
Yon orange sunset waning slow:
From fringes of the faded eve,
O, happy planet, eastward go;
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
Thy silver sister-world, and rise
To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
Dip forward under starry light,
And move me to my marriage-morn,
And round again to happy night.

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

[1842]

BREAK, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

SONGS FROM THE PRINCESS

[1850]

As thro' the land at eve we went,
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,
We fell out, my wife and I,
O we fell out I know not why,
And kiss'd again with tears.
And blessings on the falling out
That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears!
For when we came where lies the child
We lost in other years,
There above the little grave,
O there above the little grave,
We kiss'd again with tears.

SWEET and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one,
sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon:
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,
sleep.

peeling music

THE splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying,
dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying,
dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes
flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying,
dying.

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they
mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine de-
spair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no
more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a
sail,
That brings our friends up from the under-
world,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the
verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no
more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer
dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering
square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no
more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy
feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no
more.

O SWALLOW. Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest
each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the
South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow,
and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with
love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are
green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is
flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is
made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the
South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make
her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

THY voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands:
A moment, while the trumpets blow, *last y*
He sees his brood about thy knee; *child*
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

HOME they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:
All her maidens, watching, said, *child*
'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low, *widow*
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe; *mother*
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the
 sea;
 The cloud may stoop from heaven and
 take the shape,
 With fold to fold, of mountain or of
 cape;
 But O too fond, when have I answer'd
 thee?
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I
 give?
 I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
 Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee
 die!
 Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee
 live;
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are
 seal'd:
 I strove against the stream and all in
 vain:
 Let the great river take me to the main:
 No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
 Ask me no more.

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the
 white;
 Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
 Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry
 font:
 The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like
 a ghost,
 And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the
 stars,
 And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and
 leaves
 A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
 And slips into the bosom of the lake:
 So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
 Into my bosom and be lost in me.

'Come down, O maid, from yonder moun-
 tain height:
 What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd
 sang)
 In height and cold, the splendour of the
 hills?
 But cease to move so near the Heavens, and
 cease
 To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
 To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
 And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
 For Love is of the valley, come thou down
 And find him; by the happy threshold, he,

Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
 Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
 Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
 With Death and Morning on the silver
 horns,

Nor wilt thou snare him in the white
 ravine,

Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
 That huddling slant in furrow-cloven fairs
 To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
 But follow; let the torrent dance thee
 down

To find him in the valley; let the wild
 Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
 The monstrous ledges there to slope, and
 spill

Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-
 smoke,

That like a broken purpose waste in air:
 So waste not thou; but come; for all the
 vales

Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
 Arise to thee; the children call, and I
 Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every
 sound,

Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is
 sweet;

Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the
 lawn,

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
 And murmuring of innumerable bees.'

IN MEMORIAM

[1850]

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
 By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
 Thou madest Life in man and brute;
 Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
 Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
 Thou madest man, he knows not why;
 He thinks he was not made to die;
 And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
 The highest, holiest manhood, thou:
 Our wills are ours, we know not how;
 Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
 They have their day and cease to be:
 They are but broken lights of thee,
 And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;
 For knowledge is of things we see;
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,
 A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
 We mock thee when we do not fear:
 But help thy foolish ones to bear;
 Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me;
 What seem'd my worth since I began;
 For merit lives from man to man,
 And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
 Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
 I trust he lives in thee, and there
 I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
 Confusions of a wasted youth;
 Forgive them where they fail in truth,
 And in thy wisdom make me wise.

I

I held it truth, with him who sings
 To one clear harp in divers tones,
 That men may rise on stepping-stones
 Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
 And find in loss a gain to match?
 Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
 The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
 Let darkness keep her raven gloss:
 Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
 To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
 The long result of love, and boast,
 'Behold the man that loved and lost,
 But all he was is overworn.'

II

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the under-lying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
 And bring the firstling to the flock;
 And in the dusk of thee, the clock
 Beats out the little lives of men.

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
 Who changest not in any gale,
 Nor branding summer suns avail
 To touch thy thousand years of gloom:

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
 I seem to fail from out my blood
 And grow incorporate into thee.

III

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
 O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
 O sweet and bitter in a breath,
 What whispers from thy lying lip?

'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run;
 A web is wov'n across the sky;
 From out waste places comes a cry,
 And murmurs from the dying sun:

'And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
 With all the music in her tone,
 A hollow echo of my own,—
 A hollow form with empty hands.'

And shall I take a thing so blind,
 Embrace her as my natural good;
 Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
 Upon the threshold of the mind?

IV

To Sleep I give my powers away;
 My will is bondsman to the dark;
 I sit within a helmless bark,
 And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
 That thou should'st fail from thy desire,
 Who scarcely darest to inquire,
 'What is it makes me beat so low?'

Something it is which thou hast lost,
 Some pleasure from thine early years.
 Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
 That grief hath shaken into frost!

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
 All night below the darken'd eyes;
 With morning wakes the will, and cries,
 'Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.'

V

I sometimes hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel;
 For words, like Nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the quiet heart and brain,
 A use in measured language lies;
 The sad mechanic exercise,
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
 Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
 But that large grief which these enfold
 Is given in outline and no more.

VI

One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'
 That 'Loss is common to the race'—
 And common is the commonplace,
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more:
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledges now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor, — while thy head is bow'd,
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, 'here to-day,'
Or 'here to-morrow will he come.'

O somewhere, meek unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;
And thinking 'this will please him best,'
She takes a riband or a rose;

For he will see them on to-night;
And with the thought her colour burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turn'd, the curse
Had fallen, and her future Lord
Was drown'd in passing thro' the ford,
Or kill'd in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me no second friend.

VII

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more —
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

VIII

A happy lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,
Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
In those deserted walks, may find
A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she foster'd up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,
O my forsaken heart, with thee
And this poor flower of poesy
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanish'd eye,
I go to plant it on his tomb,
That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.

IX

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
Sailest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favourable speed
Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, thro' early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

X

I hear the noise about thy keel;
I hear the bell struck in the night;
I see the cabin-window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And travell'd men from foreign lands;
And letters unto trembling hands;
And, thy dark freight, a vanish'd life.

So bring him: we have idle dreams:
 This look of quiet flatters thus
 Our home-bred fancies: O to us,
 The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
 That takes the sunshine and the rains,
 Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
 The chalice of the grapes of God;

Than if with thee the roaring wells
 Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine;
 And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
 Should toss with tangle and with shells.

XI

Calm is the morn without a sound,
 Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
 And only thro' the faded leaf
 The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
 And on these dews that drench the furze,
 And all the silvery gossamers
 That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
 That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
 And crowded farms and lessening towers,
 To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
 These leaves that redden to the fall;
 And in my heart, if calm at all,
 If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
 And waves that sway themselves in rest,
 And dead calm in that noble breast
 Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

XII

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
 To bear thro' Heaven a tale of woe,
 Some dolorous message knit below
 The wild pulsation of her wings;

Like her I go; I cannot stay;
 I leave this mortal ark behind,
 A weight of nerves without a mind,
 And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
 And reach the glow of southern skies,
 And see the sails at distance rise,
 And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying; 'Comes he thus, my friend?
 Is this the end of all my care?'
 And circle moaning in the air:
 'Is this the end? Is this the end?'

And forward dart again, and play
 About the prow, and back return
 To where the body sits, and learn
 That I have been an hour away.

XIII

Tears of the widower, when he sees
 A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
 And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
 Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss for ever new,
 A void where heart on heart reposed;
 And, where warm hands have prest and
 closed,
 Silence, till I be silent too.

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
 An awful thought, a life removed,
 The human-hearted man I loved,
 A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come Time, and teach me, many years,
 I do not suffer in a dream;
 For now so strange do these things seem,
 Mine eyes have leisure for their tears;

My fancies time to rise on wing,
 And glance about the approaching sails,
 As tho' they brought but merchants' bales,
 And not the burthen that they bring.

XIV

If one should bring me this report,
 That thou hadst touch'd the land to-day,
 And I went down unto the quay,
 And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
 Should see thy passengers in rank
 Come stepping lightly down the plank,
 And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
 The man I held as half-divine;
 Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
 And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
 And how my life had droop'd of late,
 And he should sorrow o'er my state
 And marvel what possess'd my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
 No hint of death in all his frame,
 But found him all in all the same,
 I should not feel it to be strange.

XV

To-night the winds begin to rise
 And roar from yonder dropping day:
 The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
 The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
 The cattle huddled on the lea;
 And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
 The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
 That all thy motions gently pass
 Athwart a plane of molten glass,
 I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a labouring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

XVI

What words are these have fall'n from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or Sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take
The touch of change in calm or storm;
But knows no more of transient form
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
Hung in the shadow of a heaven?
Or has the shock, so harshly given,
Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink?
And stunn'd me from my power to think
And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan?

XVII

Thou comest, much wept for: such a breeze
Compell'd thy canvas, and my prayer
Was as the whisper of an air
To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move
Thro' circles of the bounding sky,
Week after week: the days go by:
Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou may'st roam,
My blessing, like a line of light,
Is on the waters day and night,
And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars
Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark;
And balmy drops in summer dark
Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,
Such precious relics brought by thee;
The dust of him I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run.

XVIII

'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

'Tis little; but it looks in truth
As if the quiet bones were blest
Among familiar names to rest
And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,
And come, whatever loves to weep,
And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,
I, falling on his faithful heart,
Would breathing thro' his lips impart
The life that almost dies in me;

That dies not, but endures with pain,
And slowly forms the firmer mind,
Treasuring the look it cannot find,
The words that are not heard again.

XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more,
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
When, fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wodded walls;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

XX

The lesser griefs that may be said,
That breathe a thousand tender vows,
Are but as servants in a house
Where lies the master newly dead;

Who speak their feeling as it is,
And weep the fulness from the mind:
'It will be hard,' they say, 'to find
Another service such as this.'

My lighter moods are like to these,
That out of words a comfort win;
But there are other griefs within,
And tears that at their fountain freeze;

For by the hearth the children sit
Cold in that atmosphere of death,
And scarce endure to draw the breath,
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
'How good! how kind! and he is gone.'

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
And sometimes harshly will he speak;
'This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men.'

Another answers, 'Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth, 'Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?'

'A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?'

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol'n away.

XXII

The path by which we twain did go,
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

And we with singing cheer'd the way,
And, crown'd with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May:

But where the path we walk'd began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
And think, that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

XXIII

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
Or breaking into song by fits,
Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
I wander, often falling lame,
And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it
ran
Thro' lands where not a leaf was dumb;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan:

When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leaped out to wed with
Thought,
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
And all was good that Time could bring,
And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.

XXIV

And was the day of my delight
As pure and perfect as I say?
The very source and fount of Day
Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,
This earth had been the Paradise
It never look'd to human eyes
Since Adam left his garden yet.

And is it that the haze of grief
Makes former gladness loom so great?
The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
A glory from its being far;
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not, when we moved therein?

XXV

I know that this was Life, — the track
Whereon with equal feet we fared;
And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
As light as carrier-birds in air;
I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love;

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
When mighty Love would cleave in twain
The lading of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

XXVI

Still onward winds the dreary way;
I with it; for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
And goodness, and hath power to see
Within the green the moulder'd tree,
And towers fall'n as soon as built—

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
Or see (in Him is no before)
In more of life true life no more
And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
Breaks hither over Indian seas,
That Shadow waiting with the keys,
To shroud me from my proper scorn.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXIX

With such compelling cause to grieve
As daily vexes household peace,
And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas-eve;

Which brings no more a welcome guest
To enrich the threshold of the night
With shower'd largess of delight
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and
Wont,

That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
Gray nurses, loving nothing new;
Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

XXX

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gambol'd, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech:
We heard them sweep the winter land;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang:
We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year: impetuously we sang:

We ceased: a gentler feeling crept
Upon us: surely rest is meet:
'They rest,' we said, 'their sleep is sweet,'
And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: 'They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gather'd power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil.'

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

XXXI

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house return'd,
Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave?

'Where wert thou, brother, those four days?'

There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

XXXII

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful
prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

XXXIII

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good:
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.

XXXIV

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild Poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

XXXV

Yet if some voice that man could trust
Should murmur from the narrow house,
'The cheeks drop in; the body bows;
Man dies: nor is there hope in dust.'

Might I not say? 'Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive.'
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
'The sound of that forgetful shore
Will change my sweetness more and
more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
Had bruised the herb and crush'd the
grape,
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

XXXVI

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

XXXVII

Urania speaks with darken'd brow:
'Thou pratest here where thou art least;
This faith has many a purer priest,
And many an abler voice than thou.

'Go down beside thy native rill,
On thy Parnassus set thy feet,
And hear thy laurel whisper sweet
About the ledges of the hill.'

And my Melpomene replies,
A touch of shame upon her cheek:
'I am not worthy ev'n to speak
Of thy prevailing mysteries;

'For I am but an earthly Muse,
And owning but a little art
To lull with song an aching heart,
And render human love his dues;

'But brooding on the dear one dead,
And all he said of things divine,
(And dear to me as sacred wine
To dying lips is all he said),

'I murmur'd, as I came along,
Of comfort clasp'd in truth reveal'd;
And loiter'd in the master's field,
And darken'd sanctities with song.'

XXXVIII

With weary steps I loiter on,
Tho' always under alter'd skies
The purple from the distance dies,
My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,
The herald melodies of spring,
But in the songs I love to sing
A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here
Survive in spirits render'd free,
Then are these songs I sing of thee
Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

XXXIX

Old warder of these buried bones,
And answering now my random stroke
With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;
But Sorrow — flit upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men, —
What whisper'd from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
And passes into gloom again.

XL

Could we forget the widow'd hour
And look on Spirits breathed away,
As on a maiden in the day
When first she wears her orange-flower!

When crown'd with blessing she doth rise
To take her latest leave of home,
And hopes and light regrets that come
Make April of her tender eyes;

And doubtful joys the father move,
And tears are on the mother's face,
As parting with a long embrace
She enters other realms of love;

Her office there to rear, to teach,
Becoming as is meet and fit
A link among the days, to knit
The generations each with each;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
A life that bears immortal fruit
In those great offices that suit
The full-grown energies of heaven.

Ay me, the difference I discern!
How often shall her old fireside
Be cheer'd with tidings of the bride,
How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,
And bring her babe, and make her boast,
Till even those that miss'd her most
Shall count new things as dear as old:

But thou and I have shaken hands,
Till growing winters lay me low;
My paths are in the fields I know,
And thine in undiscover'd lands.

XLI

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
Did ever rise from high to higher;
As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
As flies the lighter thro' the gross.

But thou art turn'd to something strange,
And I have lost the links that bound
Thy changes; here upon the ground,
No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly! yet that this could be —
That I could wing my will with might
To leap the grades of life and light,
And flash at once, my friend, to thee.

For tho' my nature rarely yields
To that vague fear implied in death;
Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,
The howlings from forgotten fields;

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor
An inner trouble I behold,
A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
That I shall be thy mate no more.

Spring
1839

Tho' following with an upward mind
The wonders that have come to thee,
Thro' all the secular to-be,
But evermore a life behind.

XLII

I vex my heart with fancies dim:
He still outstript me in the race;
It was but unity of place
That made me dream I rank'd with him.

And so may Place retain us still,
And he the much-beloved again,
A lord of large experience, train
To ripper growth the mind and will:

And what delights can equal those
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
When one that loves but knows not,
reaps
A truth from one that loves and knows?

XLIII

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
And every spirit's folded bloom
Thro' all its intervital gloom
In some long trance should slumber on;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
Bare of the body, might it last,
And silent traces of the past
Be all the colour of the flower:

So then were nothing lost to man;
So that still garden of the souls
In many a figured leaf enrolls
The total world since life began;

And love will last as pure and whole
As when he loved me here in Time,
And at the spiritual prime
Rewaken with the dawning soul.

XLIV

How fares it with the happy dead?
For here the man is more and more;
But he forgets the days before
God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
Gives out at times (he knows not
whence)
A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years
(If Death so taste Lethæan springs)
May some dim touch of earthly things
Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;
My guardian angel will speak out
In that high place, and tell thee all,

XLV

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that 'this is I,'

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'
And finds 'I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
Which else were fruitless of their due.
Had man to learn himself anew
Beyond the second birth of death.

XLVI

We ranging down this lower track,
The path we came by, thorn and flower,
Is shadow'd by the growing hour,
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall
bloom
The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd;
The fruitful hours of still increase;
Days order'd in a wealthy peace,
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
A bounded field, nor stretching far;
Look also, Love, a brooding star,
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

XLVII

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good:
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'

*quoted by
psychologists.*

XLVIII

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
 Were taken to be such as closed
 Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
 Then these were such as men might scorn:

Her care is not to part and prove;
 She takes, when harsher moods remit,
 What slender shade of doubt may flit,
 And makes it vassal unto love:

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,
 But better serves a wholesome law,
 And holds it sin and shame to draw
 The deepest measure from the chords:

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
 But rather loosens from the lip
 Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
 Their wings in tears, and skim away.

XLIX

From art, from nature, from the schools,
 Let random influences glance,
 Like light in many a shiver'd lance
 That breaks about the dappled pools:

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,
 The fancy's tenderest eddy wreath,
 The slightest air of song shall breathe
 To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,
 But blame not thou the winds that make
 The seeming-wanton ripple break,
 The tender-pencill'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
 Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
 Whose muffled motions blindly drown
 The bases of my life in tears.

L

Be near me when my light is low,
 When the blood creeps, and the nerves
 prick
 And tingle; and the heart is sick,
 And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
 Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
 And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
 And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
 And men the flies of latter spring,
 That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
 And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
 To point the term of human strife,
 And on the low dark verge of life
 The twilight of eternal day.

LI

Do we indeed desire the dead
 Should still be near us at our side?
 Is there no baseness we would hide?
 No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
 I had such reverence for his blame,
 See with clear eye some hidden shame
 And I be lessen'd in his love?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
 Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
 There must be wisdom with great Death:
 The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall:
 Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
 With larger other eyes than ours,
 To make allowance for us all.

LII

I cannot love thee as I ought,
 For love reflects the thing beloved;
 My words are only words, and moved
 Upon the topmost froth of thought.

'Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,'
 The Spirit of true love replied;
 'Thou canst not move me from thy side,
 Nor human frailty do me wrong.

'What keeps a spirit wholly true
 To that ideal which he bears?
 What record? not the sinless years
 That breathed beneath the Syrian blue:

'So fret not, like an idle girl,
 That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.
 Abide: thy wealth is gather'd in,
 When Time hath sunder'd shell from pearl.'

LIII

How many a father have I seen,
 A sober man, among his boys,
 Whose youth was full of toolish noise,
 Who wears his manhood hale and green:

And dare we to this fancy give,
 That had the wild oat not been sown,
 The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
 The grain by which a man may live?

Or, if we held the doctrine sound
 For life outliving heats of youth,
 Yet who would preach it as a truth
 To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good: define it well:
 For fear divine Philosophy
 Should push beyond her mark, and be
 Procureess to the Lords of Hell.

LIV

(Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

LV

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likeliest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI

'So careful of the type?' but no.
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone
She cries 'A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

'Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more.' And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

LVII

Peace; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;
But half my life I leave behind:
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But I shall pass; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;
And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
'Adieu, adieu,' for evermore.

LVIII

In those sad words I took farewell:
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
As drop by drop the water falls
In vaults and catacombs, they fell;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
Of hearts that beat from day to day,
Half-conscious of their dying clay,
And those cold crypts where they shall
cease.

The high Muse answer'd: 'Wherefore grieve
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?
Abide a little longer here,
And thou shalt take a nobler leave.'

LIX

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life;
As I confess it needs must be;

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good.

My centred passion cannot move,
Nor will it lessen from to-day;
But I'll have leave at times to play
As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
 With so much hope for years to come,
 That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
 Could hardly tell what name were thine.

LX

He past; a soul of nobler tone:
 My spirit loved and loves him yet,
 Like some poor girl whose heart is set
 On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,
 She finds the baseness of her lot,
 Half jealous of she knows not what,
 And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn;
 She sighs amid her narrow days,
 Moving about the household ways,
 In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbours come and go,
 And tease her till the day draws by:
 At night she weeps, 'How vain am I!
 How should he love a thing so low?'

LXI

If, in thy second state sublime,
 Thy ransom'd reason change replies
 With all the circle of the wise,
 The perfect flower of human time;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
 How dimly character'd and slight,
 How dwarf'd a growth of cold and night,
 How blanch'd with darkness must I grow!

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
 Where thy first form was made a man;
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
 The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

LXII

Tho' if an eye that's downward cast
 Could make thee somewhat blench or
 fail,

Then be my love an idle tale,
 And fading legend of the past;

And thou, as one that once declined,
 When he was little more than boy,
 On some unworthy heart with joy,
 But lives to wed an equal mind;

And breathes a novel world, the while
 His other passion wholly dies,
 Or in the light of deeper eyes
 Is matter for a flying smile.

LXIII

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,
 And love in which my hound has part,
 Can hang no weight upon my heart
 In its assumptions up to heaven;

And I am so much more than these
 As thou, perchance, art more than I,
 And yet I spare them sympathy,
 And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
 As, unto vaster motions bound,
 The circuits of thine orbit round
 A higher height, a deeper deep.

LXIV

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
 As some divinely gifted man,
 Whose life in low estate began
 And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
 And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
 And breasts the blows of circumstance,
 And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
 And lives to clutch the golden keys,
 To mould a mighty state's decrees,
 And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
 Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
 The pillar of a people's hope,
 The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
 When all his active powers are still,
 A distant dearthness in the hill,
 A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
 While yet beside its vocal springs
 He play'd at counsellors and kings,
 With one that was his earliest mate;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea
 And reaps the labour of his hands,
 Or in the furrow musing stands;
 'Does my old friend remember me?'

LXV

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;
 I lull a fancy trouble-tost
 With 'Love's too precious to be lost,
 A little grain shall not be spilt.'

And in that solace can I sing,
 Till out of painful phases wrought
 There flutters up a happy thought,
 Self-balanced on a lightsome wing:

Since we deserved the name of friends,
 And thine effect so lives in me,
 A part of mine may live in thee
 And move thee on to noble ends.

LXVI

You thought my heart too far diseased;
 You wonder when my fancies play
 To find me gay among the gay,
 Like one with any trifle pleased,

The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly with my kind,
And like to him whose sight is lost;

Whose feet are guided thro' the land,
Whose jest among his friends is free,
Who takes the children on his knee,
And winds their curls about his hand:

He plays with threads, he beats his chair
For pastime, dreaming of the sky;
His inner day can never die,
His night of loss is always there.

LXVII

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west,
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away;
From off my bed the moonlight dies;
And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipt in grey:

And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

LXVIII

When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my
breath;
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not
Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead:

I walk as ere I walk'd forlorn,
When all our path was fresh with dew,
And all the bugle breezes blew
Reveillée to the breaking morn.

But what is this? I turn about,
I find a trouble in thine eye,
Which makes me sad I know not why,
Nor can my dream resolve the doubt:

But ere the lark hath left the lea
I wake, and I discern the truth;
It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

LXIX

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,
That Nature's ancient power was lost:
The streets were black with smoke and
frost,
They chatter'd trifles at the door:

I wander'd from the noisy town,
I found a wood with thorny boughs:
I took the thorns to bind my brows,
I wore them like a civic crown:

I met with scoffs, I met with scorn
From youth and babe and hoary hairs:
They call'd me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns:

They call'd me fool, they call'd me child:
I found an angel of the night;
The voice was low, the look was bright;
He look'd upon my crown and smiled:

He reach'd the glory of a hand,
That seem'd to touch it into leaf;
The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand.

LXX

I cannot see the features right,
When on the gloom I strive to paint
The face I know; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
A hand that points, and palled shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning
doors,
And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;
Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And thro' a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

LXXI

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
And madness, thou hast forged at last
A night-long Present of the Past
In which we went thro' summer France.

Hadst thou such credit with the soul?
Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong,
That so my pleasure may be whole;

While now we talk as once we talk'd
Of men and minds, the dust of change,
The days that grow to something strange,
In walking as of old we walk'd

Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach.

LXXII

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar white,
And lash with storm the streaming pane?

Day, when my crown'd estate begun
 To pine in that reverse of doom,
 Which sicken'd every living bloom,
 And blurr'd the splendour of the sun;
 Who usherest in the dolorous hour
 With thy quick tears that make the rose
 Pull sideways, and the daisy close
 Her crimson fringes to the shower;
 Who might'st have heaved a windless flame
 Up the deep East, or, whispering, play'd
 A chequer-work of beam and shade
 Along the hills, yet look'd the same,
 As wan, as chill, as wild as now;
 Day, mark'd as with some hideous crime,
 When the dark hand struck down thro'
 time,
 And cancell'd nature's best: but thou,
 Lift as thou may'st thy burthen'd brows
 Thro' clouds that drench the morning
 star,
 And whirl the ungarner'd sheaf afar,
 And sow the sky with flying boughs,
 And up thy vault with roaring sound
 Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day;
 Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
 And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

LXXIII

So many worlds, so much to do,
 So little done, such things to be,
 How know I what had need of thee,
 For thou wert strong as thou wert true?
 The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,
 The head hath miss'd an earthly wreath:
 I curse not nature, no, nor death;
 For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass; the path that each man trod
 Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
 What fame is left for human deeds
 In endless age? It rests with God.

O hollow wraith of dying fame,
 Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
 And self-infolds the large results
 Of force that would have forged a name.

LXXIV

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
 To those that watch it more and more,
 A likeness, hardly seen before,
 Come out — to some one of his race:

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
 I see thee what thou art, and know
 Thy likeness to the wise below,
 Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see,
 And what I see I leave unsaid,
 Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
 His darkness beautiful with thee.

LXXV

I leave thy praises unexpress'd
 In verse that brings myself relief,
 And by the measure of my grief
 I leave thy greatness to be guess'd;

What practice howso'er expert
 In fitting aptest words to things,
 Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
 Hath power to give thee as thou wert?

I care not in these fading days
 To raise a cry that lasts not long,
 And round thee with the breeze of song
 To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perish'd in the green,
 And, while we breathe beneath the sun,
 The world which credits what is done
 Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame;
 But somewhere, out of human view,
 Whate'er thy hands are set to do
 Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

LXXVI

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
 And in a moment set thy face
 Where all the starry heavens of space
 Are sharpen'd to a needle's end;

Take wings of foresight; lighten thro'
 The secular abyss to come,
 And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
 Before the mouldering of a yew;

And if the matin songs, that woke
 The darkness of our planet, last,
 Thine own shall wither in the vast,
 Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy
 bowers
 With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain;
 And what are they when these remain
 The ruin'd shells of hollow towers?

LXXVII

What hope is here for modern rhyme
 To him who turns a musing eye
 On songs, and deeds, and lives, that lie
 Foreshorten'd in the tract of time?

These mortal lullabies of pain
 May bind a book, may line a box,
 May serve to curl a maiden's locks;
 Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,
 And, passing, turn the page that tells
 A grief, then changed to something else,
 Sung by a long-forgotten mind.

But what of that? My darken'd ways
 Shall ring with music all the same;
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,
 To utter love more sweet than praise.

LXXVIII

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possess'd the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve:

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who show'd a token of distress?
No single tear, no mark of pain:
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No — mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

LXXIX

'More than my brothers are to me,' —
Let this not vex thee, noble heart!
I know thee of what force thou art
To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,
As moulded like in Nature's mint;
And hill and wood and field did print
The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd
Thro' all his eddying coves; the same
All winds that roam the twilight came
In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,
One lesson from one book we learn'd,
Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,
But he was rich where I was poor,
And he supplied my want the more
As his unlikeness fitted mine.

LXXX

If any vague desire should rise,
That holy Death ere Arthur died
Had moved me kindly from his side,
And dropt the dust on tearless eyes;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,
The grief my loss in him had wrought,
A grief as deep as life or thought,
But stay'd in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain;
I hear the sentence that he speaks;
He bears the burthen of the weeks,
But turns his burthen into gain.

His credit thus shall set me free;
And, influence-rich to soothe and save,
Unused example from the grave
Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

LXXXI

Could I have said while he was here,
'My love shall now no further range;
There cannot come a mellow change,
For now is love mature in ear.'

Love, then, had hope of richer store:
What end is here to my complaint?
This haunting whisper makes me faint,
'More years had made me love thee more.'

But Death returns an answer sweet:
'My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain,
It might have drawn from after-heat.'

LXXXII

I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth:
I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, elsewhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart;
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

LXXXIII

Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year delaying long;
Thou doest expectant nature wrong;
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud
And flood a fresher throat with song.

LXXXIV

When I contemplate all alone
 The life that had been thine below,
 And fix my thoughts on all the glow
 To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crown'd with good,
 A central warmth diffusing bliss
 In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
 On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
 For now the day was drawing on,
 When thou should'st link thy life with
 one

Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled 'Uncle' on my knee;
 But that remorseless iron hour
 Made cypress of her orange flower,
 Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
 To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.
 I see their unborn faces shine
 Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honour'd guest,
 Thy partner in the flowery walk
 Of letters, genial table-talk,
 Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labour fills
 The lips of men with honest praise,
 And sun by sun the happy days
 Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
 And all the train of bounteous hours
 Conduct by paths of growing powers,
 To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
 Her lavish mission richly wrought,
 Leaving great legacies of thought,
 Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
 As link'd with thine in love and fate,
 And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
 To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
 And He that died in Holy Land
 Would reach us out the shining hand,
 And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
 Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
 The old bitterness again, and break
 The low beginnings of content.

LXXXV

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
 I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
 Than never to have loved at all—

O true in word, and tried in deed,
 Demanding, so to bring relief
 To this which is our common grief,
 What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above
 Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;
 And whether love for him have drain'd
 My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
 A faithful answer from the breast,
 Thro' light reproaches, half exprest,
 And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,
 Till on mine ear this message falls,
 That in Vienna's fatal walls
 God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
 That range above our mortal state,
 In circle round the blessed gate,
 Received and gave him welcome there;

And led him thro' the blissful climes,
 And show'd him in the fountain fresh
 All knowledge that the sons of flesh
 Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
 Whose life, whose thoughts were little
 worth,
 To wander on a darken'd earth,
 Where all things round me breathed of
 him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,
 O heart, with kindest motion warm,
 O sacred essence, other form,
 O solemn ghost, O crowned soul!

Yet none could better know than I,
 How much of act at human hands
 The sense of human will demands
 By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
 I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
 His being working in mine own,
 The footsteps of his life in mine;

A life that all the Muses deck'd
 With gifts of grace, that might express
 All-comprehensive tenderness,
 All-subtilising intellect:

And so my passion hath not swerved
 To works of weakness, but I find
 An image comforting the mind,
 And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
 That loved to handle spiritual strife,
 Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
 But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
 For other friends that once I met;
 Nor can it suit me to forget
 The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love: I count it crime
 To mourn for any overmuch;
 I, the divided half of such
 A friendship as had master'd Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
 Eternal, separate from fears:
 The all-assuming months and years
 Can take no part away from this:

But Summer on the steaming floods,
 And Spring that swells the narrow brooks,
 And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,
 That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave
 Recalls, in change of light or gloom,
 My old affection of the tomb,
 And my prime passion in the grave:

My old affection of the tomb,
 A part of stillness, years to speak:
 'Arise, and get thee forth and seek
 A friendship for the years to come.

'I watch thee from the quiet shore;
 Thy spirit up to mine can reach;
 But in dear words of human speech
 We two communicate no more.'

And I, 'Can clouds of nature stain
 The starry clearness of the free?
 How is it? Canst thou feel for me
 Some painless sympathy with pain?'

And lightly does the whisper fall;
 'Tis hard for thee to fathom this;
 I triumph in conclusive bliss,
 And that serene result of all.'

So hold I commerce with the dead;
 Or so methinks the dead would say;
 Or so shall grief with symbols play,
 And pining life be fancy-fed.

Now looking to some settled end,
 That these things pass, and I shall prove
 A meeting somewhere, love with love,
 I crave your pardon, O my friend;

If not so fresh, with love as true,
 I, clasping brother-hands, aver
 I could not, if I would, transfer
 The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart
 The promise of the golden hours?
 First love, first friendship, equal powers,
 That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,
 That beats within a lonely place,
 That yet remembers his embrace,
 But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, tho' widow'd, may not rest
 Quite in the love of what is gone,
 But seeks to beat in time with one
 That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,
 Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
 The primrose of the later year,
 As not unlike to that of Spring.

LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
 That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
 Of evening over brake and bloom
 And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
 Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
 And shadowing down the horned flood
 In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
 The full new life that feeds thy breath
 Throughout my frame, till Doubt and
 Death,
 Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
 On leagues of odour streaming far,
 To where in yonder orient star
 A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

LXXXVII

I past beside the reverend walls
 In which of old I wore the gown;
 I roved at random thro' the town,
 And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes
 The storm their high-built organs make,
 And thunder-music, rolling, shake
 The prophets blazon'd on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
 The measured pulse of racing oars
 Among the willows; paced the shores
 And many a bridge, and all about

The same grey flats again, and felt
 The same, but not the same; and last
 Up that long walk of limes I past
 To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door:
 I linger'd; all within was noise
 Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys
 That crash'd the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
 Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
 And labour, and the changing mart,
 And all the framework of the land;

*Primrose
 "Apollon"*

When one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string;
And one would pierce an outer ring,
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master-bowman, he,
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who, but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and grace
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo.

LXXXVIII

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

And I — my harp would prelude woe —
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

LXXXIX

Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town:

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixt in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling
courts
And dusty purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,
Immantled in ambrosial dark,
To drink the cooler air, and mark
The landscape winking thro' the heat:

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn:

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon:

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,
Discuss'd the books to love or hate,
Or touch'd the changes of the state,
Or threaded some Socratic dream;

But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For 'ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

'And merge' he said 'in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man.'
We talk'd: the stream beneath us ran,
The wine-flask lying couch'd in moss,

Or cool'd within the glooming wave;
And last, returning from afar,
Before the crimson-circled star
Had fall'n into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
We heard behind the woodbine veil
The milk that bubbled in the pail,
And buzzings of the honied hours.

XC

He tasted love with half his mind,
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
Where highest heaven, who first could
fling
This bitter seed among mankind;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes
Were closed with wail, resume their life,
They would but find in child and wife
An iron welcome when they rise:

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,
To pledge them with a kindly tear,
To talk them o'er, to wish them here,
To count their memories half divine;

But if they came who past away,
Behold their brides in other hands;
The hard heir strides about their lands,
And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, tho' their sons were none of these,
Not less the yet-loved sire would make
Confusion worse than death, and shake
The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me:
Whatever change the years have wrought,
I find not yet one lonely thought
That cries against my wish for thee.

XCI

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush;
Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know
Thy spirit in time among thy peers;
The hope of unaccomplish'd years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
May breathe, with many roses sweet,
Upon the thousand waves of wheat,
That ripple round the lonely grange;

Come: not in watches of the night,
But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,
Come, beauteous in thine after form,
And like a finer light in light.

XCII

If any vision should reveal
Thy likeness, I might count it vain
As but the canker of the brain;
Yea, tho' it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast
Together in the days behind,
I might but say, I hear a wind
Of memory murmuring the past.

Yea, tho' it spake and bared to view
A fact within the coming year;
And tho' the months, revolving near,
Should prove the phantom-warning true,

They might not seem thy prophecies,
But spiritual presentiments,
And such refraction of events
As often rises ere they rise.

XCIII

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
No spirit ever brake the band
That stays him from the native land,
Where first he walk'd when claspt in clay?

No visual shade of some one lost,
But he, the Spirit himself, may come
Where all the nerve of sense is numb;
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from thy sightless range
With gods in un conjectured bliss,
O, from the distance of the abyss
Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
The wish too strong for words to name;
That in this blindness of the frame
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

XCIV

How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought would
hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
The spirits from their golden day,
Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
Imaginations calm and fair,
The memory like a cloudless air,
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,
And doubt beside the portal waits,
They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar within.

XCV

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
For underfoot the herb was dry;
And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn
Unwavering: not a cricket chirr'd:
The brook alone far-off was heard,
And on the board the fluttering urn:

And bats went round in fragrant skies,
And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd
From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd at
ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
Withdrew themselves from me and night,
And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fall'n leaves which kept their
green,
The noble letters of the dead:

And strangely on the silence broke
The silent-speaking words, and strange
Was love's dumb cry defying change
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen thro' wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seem'd at last
His living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in his was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of
Chance—

The blows of Death. At length my
trance
Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became:

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
The knolls once more where, couch'd at
ease,

The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field:

And suck'd from out the distant gloom
A breeze began to tremble o'er
The large leaves of the sycamore,
And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung
The heavy-folded rose, and flung
The lilies to and fro, and said

'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

XCVI

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplex in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

XCVII

My love has talk'd with rocks and trees;
He finds on misty mountain-ground
His own vast shadow glory-crown'd;
He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life—
I look'd on these and thought of thee
In vastness and in mystery,
And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two—they dwelt with eye on eye,
Their hearts of old have beat in tune,
Their meetings made December June,
Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never past away;
The days she never can forget
Are earnest that he loves her yet,
Whate'er the faithless people say.

Her life is lone, he sits apart,
He loves her yet, she will not weep,
Tho' rapt in matters dark and deep
He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,
He reads the secret of the star,
He seems so near and yet so far,
He looks so cold: she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,
A wither'd violet is her bliss:
She knows not what his greatness is,
For that, for all, she loves him more.

For him she plays, to him she sings
Of early faith and plighted vows;
She knows but matters of the house,
And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fixt and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
'I cannot understand: I love.'

XCVIII

You leave us; you will see the Rhine,
And those fair hills I sail'd below,
When I was there with him; and go
By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,
That City. All her splendour seems
No livelier than the wisp that gleams
On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair
Enwind her isles, unmark'd of me:
I have not seen, I will not see
Vienna; rather dream that there,

A treble darkness, Evil haunts
The birth, the bridal; friend from friend
Is oftener parted, fathers bend
Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey
By each cold hearth, and sadness flings
Her shadow on the blaze of kings:
And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town
With statelier progress to and fro
The double tides of chariots flow
By park and suburb under brown

Of lustier leaves; nor more content,
He told me, lives in any crowd,
When all is gay with lamps, and loud
With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain;
And wheels the circled dance, and breaks
The rocket molten into flakes
Of crimson or in emerald rain.

XCIX

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds,
So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
On yon swoll'n brook that bubbles fast
By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
A song that slights the coming care,
And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,
And unto myriads more, of death.

O wheresoever those may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
To-day they count as kindred souls;
They know me not, but mourn with me.

C.

I climb the hill: from end to end
Of all the landscape underneath,
I find no place that does not breathe
Some gracious memory of my friend;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,
Or low morass and whispering reed,
Or simple stile from mead to mead,
Or sheepwalk up the windy wold;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw
That hears the latest linnnet trill,
Nor quarry trench'd along the hill
And haunted by the wrangling daw;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock;
Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves
To left and right thro' meadowy curves,
That feed the mothers of the flock;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,
And each reflects a kindlier day;
And, leaving these, to pass away,
I think, once more he seems to die.

CI

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of hern and crane;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades:
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

CII

We leave the well-beloved place
Where first we gazed upon the sky;
The roofs, that heard our earliest cry,
Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
As down the garden-walks I move,
Two spirits of a diverse love
Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, 'Here thy boyhood sung
Long since its matin song, and heard
The low love-language of the bird
In native hazels tassel-hung.'

The other answers, 'Yea, but here
Thy feet have stray'd in after hours
With thy lost friend among the bowers,
And this hath made them trebly dear.'

These two have striven half the day,
And each prefers his separate claim,
Poor rivals in a losing game,
That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go: my feet are set
To leave the pleasant fields and farms;
They mix in one another's arms
To one pure image of regret.

CIII

On that last night before we went
From out the doors where I was bred,
I dream'd a vision of the dead,
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
And maidens with me: distant hills
From hidden summits fed with rills
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
They sang of what is wise and good
And graceful. In the centre stood
A statue veil'd, to which they sang;

And which, tho' veil'd, was known to me,
The shape of him I loved, and love
For ever: then flew in a dove
And brought a summons from the sea:

And when they learnt that I must go,
They wept and wail'd, but led the way
To where a little shallop lay
At anchor in the flood below;

And on by many a level mead,
And shadowing bluff that made the banks,
We glided winding under ranks
Of iris, and the golden reed;

And still as vaster grew the shore,
And roll'd the floods in grander space,
The maidens gather'd strength and grace
And presence, lordlier than before;

And I myself, who sat apart
And watch'd them, wax'd in every limb;
I felt the thews of Anakim,
The pulses of a Titan's heart;

As one would sing the death of war,
And one would chant the history
Of that great race which is to be,
And one the shaping of a star;

Until the forward-creeping tides
Began to foam, and we to draw
From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
But thrice as large as man he bent
To greet us. Up the side I went,
And fell in silence on his neck:

Whereat those maidens with one mind
Bewail'd their lot; I did them wrong:
'We served thee here,' they said, 'so long,
And wilt thou leave us now behind?'

So rapt I was, they could not win
An answer from my lips, but he
Replying, 'Enter likewise ye
And go with us:' they enter'd in.

And while the wind began to sweep
A music out of sheet and shroud,
We steer'd her toward a crimson cloud.
That landlike slept along the deep.

CIV

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CV

To-night ungather'd let us leave
This laurel, let this holly stand:
We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
And silent under other snows:
There in due time the woodbine blows,
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
The genial hour with mask and mime;
For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
By which our lives are chiefly proved,
A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;
For who would keep an ancient form
Thro' which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;
Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be blown;
No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

CVI

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
 The year is going, let him go;
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
 For those that here we see no more;
 Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
 Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
 And ancient forms of party strife;
 Ring in the nobler modes of life,
 With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
 The faithless coldness of the times;
 Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
 But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
 The civic slander and the spite;
 Ring in the love of truth and right,
 Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,
 Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
 The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
 Ring out the darkness of the land,
 Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CVII

It is the day when he was born,
 A bitter day that early sank
 Behind a purple-frosty bank
 Of vapour, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
 To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
 The blast of North and East, and ice
 Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
 To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
 Above the wood which grides and clangs
 Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
 To darken on the rolling brine
 That breaks the coast. But fetch the
 wine,
 Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
 To make a solid core of heat;
 Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
 Of all things ev'n as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
 With books and music, surely we
 Will drink to him, what'er he be,
 And sing the songs he loved to hear.

CVIII

I will not shut me from my kind,
 And, lest I stiffen into stone,
 I will not eat my heart alone,
 Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
 And vacant yearning, tho' with might
 To scale the heaven's highest height,
 Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
 But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
 And on the depths of death there swims
 The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
 Of sorrow under human skies:
 'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
 Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

CIX

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
 From household fountains never dry;
 The critic clearness of an eye,
 That saw thro' all the Muses' walk;

Seraphic intellect and force
 To seize and throw the doubts of man;
 Impassion'd logic, which outran
 The hearer in its fiery course;

High nature amorous of the good,
 But touch'd with no ascetic gloom;
 And passion pure in snowy bloom
 Thro' all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
 Of freedom in her regal seat
 Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
 The blind hysterics of the Celt;

And manhood fused with female grace
 In such a sort, the child would twine
 A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,
 And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
 Have look'd on: if they look'd in vain,
 My shame is greater who remain,
 Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

CX

Thy converse drew us with delight,
 The men of rathe and riper years:
 The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
 Forgot thy weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,
 The proud was half disarm'd of pride,
 Nor cared the serpent at thy side
 To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,
 The flippant put himself to school
 And heard thee, and the brazen fool
 Was soften'd, and he knew not why;

While I, thy nearest, sat apart,
 And felt thy triumph was as mine;
 And loved them more, that they were
 thine,
 The graceful tact, the Christian art;
 Nor mine the sweetness or the skill,
 But mine the love that will not tire,
 And, born of love, the vague desire
 That spurs an imitative will.

CXI

The churl in spirit, up or down
 Along the scale of ranks, thro' all,
 To him who grasps a golden ball,
 By blood a king, at heart a clown;
 The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
 His want in forms for fashion's sake,
 Will let his coltish nature break
 At seasons thro' the gilded pale:
 For who can always act? but he,
 To whom a thousand memories call,
 Not being less but more than all
 The gentleness he seem'd to be,
 Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
 And native growth of noble mind;
 Nor ever narrowness or spite,
 Or villain fancy fleeting by,
 Drew in the expression of an eye,
 Where God and Nature met in light;
 And thus he bore without abuse
 The grand old name of gentleman,
 Defamed by every charlatan,
 And soil'd with all ignoble use.

CXII

High wisdom holds my wisdom less,
 That I, who gaze with temperate eyes
 On glorious insufficiencies,
 Set light by narrower perfectness.
 But thou, that fillest all the room
 Of all my love, art reason why
 I seem to cast a careless eye
 On souls, the lesser lords of doom.
 For what wert thou? some novel power
 Sprang up for ever at a touch,
 And hope could never hope too much,
 In watching thee from hour to hour,
 Large elements in order brought,
 And tracts of calm from tempest made,
 And world-wide fluctuation sway'd
 In vassal tides that follow'd thought.

CXIII

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise;
 Yet how much wisdom sleeps with thee
 Which not alone had guided me,
 But served the seasons that may rise;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen
 In intellect, with force and skill
 To strive, to fashion, to fulfil—
 I doubt not what thou wouldst have been:

A life in civic action warm,
 A soul on highest mission sent,
 A potent voice of Parliament,
 A pillar steadfast in the storm,

Should licensed boldness gather force,
 Becoming, when the time has birth,
 A lever to uplift the earth
 And roll it in another course,

With thousand shocks that come and go,
 With agonies, with energies,
 With overthrowings, and with cries,
 And undulations to and fro.

CXIV

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
 Against her beauty? May she mix
 With men and prosper! Who shall fix
 Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire:
 She sets her forward countenance
 And leaps into the future chance,
 Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—
 She cannot fight the fear of death.
 What is she, cut from love and faith,
 But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot, to burst
 All barriers in her onward race
 For power. Let her know her place;
 She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
 If all be not in vain; and guide
 Her footsteps, moving side by side
 With wisdom, like the younger child:

For she is earthly of the mind,
 But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
 O, friend, who camest to thy goal
 So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
 Who grewest not alone in power
 And knowledge, but by year and hour
 In reverence and in charity.

CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
 Now burgeons every maze of quick
 About the flowering squares, and thick
 By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,
 And drown'd in yonder living blue
 The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greenening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

CXVI

Is it, then, regret for buried time
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
And meets the year, and gives and takes
The colours of the crescent prime?

Not all: the songs, the stirring air,
The life re-orient out of dust,
Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone;
And that dear voice, I once have known,
Still speak to me of me and mine:

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead;
Less yearning for the friendship fled,
Than some strong bond which is to be.

CXVII

O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss:

That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet;
And unto meeting when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothed wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to
clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

CXIX

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps
I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

CXX

I trust I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was born to other things.

CXXI

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
And ready, thou, to die with him,
Thou watchest all things ever dim
And dimmer, and a glory done:

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
The boat is drawn upon the shore;
Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
By thee the world's great work is heard
Beginning, and the wakeful bird;
Behind thee comes the greater light:

The market boat is on the stream,
And voices hail it from the brink;
Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
For what is one, the first, the last,
Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

CXXII

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
While I rose up against my doom,
And yearn'd to burst the folded gloom,
To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,
The strong imagination roll
A sphere of stars about my soul,
In all her motion one with law;

If thou wert with me, and the grave
Divide us not, be with me now,
And enter in at breast and brow,
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quicken'd with a livelier breath,
And like an inconsiderate boy,
As in the former flash of joy,
I slip the thoughts of life and death;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
And every dew-drop paints a bow,
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
And every thought breaks out a rose.

CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath
been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

CXXIV

That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

CXXV

Whatever I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her vouth;
She did but look through dimmer eyes;
Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fix'd in truth:

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the song;
And if the words were sweet and strong
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
And this electric force, that keeps
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

CXXVI

Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

CXXVII

And all is well, tho' faith and form
Be sunder'd in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar, in his rags:
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,
The brute earth lightens to the sky,
And the great Æon sinks in blood,

And compass'd by the fires of Hell;
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

CXXVIII

The love that rose on stronger wings,
Unpalsied when he met with Death,
Is comrade of the lesser faith
That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood
Of onward time shall yet be made,
And throned races may degrade;
Yet O ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,
If all your office had to do
With old results that look like new;
If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,
To fool the crowd with glorious lies,
To cleave a creed in sects and cries,
To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,
To cramp the student at his desk,
To make old bareness picturesque
And tuft with grass a feudal tower;

Why then my scorn might well descend
On you and yours. I see in part
That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil coöperant to an end.

CXXIX

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal;
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeper, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

CXXXI

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears, *Thou dost, & she waits*
A cry above the conquer'd years *.. the victor*
To one that with us works, and trust, *hearts at*

With faith that comes of self-control, *beginning an*
The truths that never can be proved, *key to whole*
Until we close with all we loved, *person.*
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,
Demand not thou a marriage lay;
In that it is thy marriage day
Is music more than any song. *Epilogue*

Nor have I felt so much of bliss
Since first he told me that he loved
A daughter of our house; nor proved
Since that dark day a day like this;

Tho' I since then have number'd o'er
Some thrice three years: they went and
came,
Remade the blood and changed the frame,
And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm
In dying songs a dead regret,
But like a statue solid-set,
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more
Than in the summers that are flown,
For I myself with these have grown
To something greater than before;

Which makes appear the songs I made
As echoes out of weaker times,
As half but idle brawling rhymes,
The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon?
She enters, glowing like the moon
Of Eden on its bridal bower:

On me she bends her blissful eyes
And then on thee; they meet thy look
And brighten like the star that shook
Betwixt the palms of paradise.

O when her life was yet in bud,
He too foretold the perfect rose.
For thee she grew, for thee she grows
For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy; full of power;
As gentle; liberal-minded, great,
Consistent; wearing all that weight
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out: the noon is near,
And I must give away the bride;
She fears not, or with thee beside
And me behind her, will not fear:

For I that danced her on my knee,
That watch'd her on her nurse's arm,
That shielded all her life from harm,
At last must part with her to thee;

Now waiting to be made a wife,
Her feet, my darling, on the dead;
Their pensive tablets round her head,
And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,
The 'wilt thou' answer'd, and again
The 'wilt thou' ask'd, till out of twain
Her sweet 'I will' has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be read,
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
By village eyes as yet unborn;
The names are sign'd, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
The joy to every wandering breeze;
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

O happy hour, and happier hours
Await them. Many a merry face
Salutes them—maidens of the place,
That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour, behold the bride
With him to whom her hand I gave.
They leave the porch, they pass the grave
That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,
For them the light of life increased,
Who stay to share the morning feast,
Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance
To meet and greet a whiter sun;
My drooping memory will not shun
The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,
And hearts are warm'd and faces bloom,
As drinking health to bride and groom
We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I
Conjecture of a stiller guest,
Perchance, perchance, among the rest,
And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,
And those white-favour'd horses wait;
They rise, but linger; it is late;
Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark
From little cloudlets on the grass,
But sweeps away as out we pass
To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,
And talk of others that are wed,
And how she look'd, and what he said,
And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
The shade of passing thought, the wealth
Of words and wit, the double health,
The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance;—till I retire:
Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,
And high in heaven the streaming cloud,
And on the downs a rising fire:

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapour sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths that branch and
spread
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;
And breaking let the splendour fall
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
And, star and system rolling past,
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved thro' life of lower phase,
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod
This planet, was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

THE EAGLE

FRAGMENT

[1851]

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

[1852]

I

BURY the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation,
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty
nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we de-
plore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the Past.

No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
Our greatest yet with least pretense,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good grey head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men
drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds
that blew!

Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be
seen no more.

V

All is over and done:
Render thanks to the Giver,
England, for thy son.
Let the bell be toll'd.
Render thanks to the Giver,
And render him to the mould.
Under the cross of gold
That shines over city and river,
There he shall rest for ever
Among the wise and the bold.
Let the bell be toll'd:
And a reverent people behold
The towering car, the sable steeds:
Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
Dark in its funeral fold.
Let the bell be toll'd:
And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;
And the sound of the sorrowing anthem
roll'd
Thro' the dome of the golden cross;
And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;
He knew their voices of old.
For many a time in many a clime
His captain's-ear has heard them boom
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom:
When he with those deep voices wrought,
Guarding realms and kings from shame;
With those deep voices our dead captain
taught
The tyrant, and asserts his claim
In that dread sound to the great name,
Which he has worn so pure of blame,
In praise and in dispraise the same,
A man of well-attemper'd frame.
O civic muse, to such a name,

To such a name for ages long,
To such a name,
Preserve a broad approach of fame,
And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd
guest,
With banner and with music, with soldier
and with priest,
With a nation weeping, and breaking on
my rest?

Mighty Seaman, this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea.
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous
man,

The greatest sailor since our world began.

Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
To thee the greatest soldier comes;

For this is he

Was great by land as thou by sea;
His foes were thine; he kept us free;

O give him welcome, this is he
Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
And worthy to be laid by thee;

For this is England's greatest son,
He that gain'd a hundred fights,
Nor ever lost an English gun;

This is he that far away
Against the myriads of Assaye
Clash'd with his fiery few and won;

And underneath another sun,
Warring on a later day,
Round affrighted Lisbon drew

The treble works, the vast designs
Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
Where he greatly stood at bay,

Whence he issued forth anew,
And ever great and greater grew,
Beating from the wasted vines
Back to France her banded swarms,
Back to France with countless blows,
Till o'er the hills her eagles flew

Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
Follow'd up in valley and glen
With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
And England pouring on her foes.
Such a war had such a close.

Again their ravening eagle rose
In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing
wings,

And barking for the thrones of kings;
Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler
down;

A day of onsets of despair!
Dash'd on every rocky square
Their surging charges foam'd themselves
away;

Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;
Thro' the long-tormented air
Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,

And down we swept and charged and over-
threw.

So great a soldier taught us there,
What long-enduring hearts could do
In that world's-earthquake, Waterloo!
Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
If aught of things that here befall
Touch a spirit among things divine,
If love of country move thee there at all,
Be glad, because his bones are laid by
thine!

And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
In full acclaim,

A people's voice,
The proof and echo of all human fame,
A people's voice, when they rejoice
At civic revel and pomp and game,
Attest their great commander's claim
With honour, honour, honour, honour to
him,

Eternal honour to his name.

VII

A people's voice! we are a people yet.
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams
forget,

Confused by brainless mobs and lawless
Powers;

Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly
set

His Briton in blown seas and storming
showers,

We have a voice, with which to pay the
debt

Of boundless love and reverence and regret
To those great men who fought, and kept
it ours.

And keep it ours, O God, from brute con-
trol;

O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the
soul

Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom
sown

Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there
springs

Our loyal passion for our temperate kings:
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of
mind,

Till crowds at length be sane and crowns
be just.

But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts;
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.
Your cannons moulder on the seaward
wall;

His voice is silent in your council-hall

For ever; and whatever tempests lour
 For ever silent; even if they broke
 In thunder, silent; yet remember all
 He spoke among you, and the Man who
 spoke;

Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
 Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;
 Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
 Thro' either babbling world of high and
 low;

Whose life was work, whose language rife
 With rugged maxims hewn from life;
 Who never spoke against a foe;
 Whose eighty winters freeze with one re-
 buke

All great self-seekers trampling on the
 right:

Truth-teller was our England's Alfred
 named;

Truth-lover was our English Duke;
 Whatever record leap to light
 He never shall be shamed.

VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
 He, on whom from both her open hands
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
 Yea, let all good things await
 Him who cares not to be great,
 But as he saves or serves the state.
 Not once or twice in our rough island-
 story,

The path of duty was the way to glory;
 He that walks it, only thirsting
 For the right, and learns to deaden
 Love of self, before his journey closes,
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredden
 All voluptuous garden-roses.

Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory:
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has
 won

His path upward, and prevail'd,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
 Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and
 sun.

Such was he: his work is done,
 But while the races of mankind endure,
 Let his great example stand
 Colossal, seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman
 pure:

Till in all lands and thro' all human story
 The path of duty be the way to glory:
 And let the land whose hearths he saved
 from shame

For many and many an age proclaim

At civic revel and pomp and game,
 And when the long-illumin'd cities flame,
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to
 him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung
 By some yet unmoulded tongue
 Far on in summers that we shall not see:
 Peace, it is a day of pain
 For one about whose patriarchal knee
 Late the little children clung:
 O peace, it is a day of pain
 For one, upon whose hand and heart and
 brain

Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
 Ours the pain, be his the gain!
 More than is of man's degree
 Must be with us, watching here
 At this, our great solemnity.
 Whom we see not we revere,
 We revere, and we refrain
 From talk of battles loud and vain,
 And brawling memories all too free
 For such a wise humility
 As befits a solemn fane:
 We revere, and while we hear
 The tides of Music's golden sea
 Setting toward eternity,
 Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
 Until we doubt not that for one so true
 There must be other nobler work to do
 Than when he fought at Waterloo,
 And Victor he must ever be.
 For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
 And break the shore, and evermore
 Make and break, and work their will;
 Tho' world on world in myriad myriads
 roll

Round us, each with different powers,
 And other forms of life than ours,
 What know we greater than the soul?
 On God and Godlike men we build our
 trust.

Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's
 ears:

The dark crowd moves, and there are
 sobs and tears:
 The black earth yawns: the mortal disap-
 pears;

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust:
 He is gone who seem'd so great.—
 Gone; but nothing can bereave him
 Of the force he made his own
 Being here, and we believe him
 Something far advanced in State,
 And that he wears a truer crown
 Than any wreath that man can weave him.
 Speak no more of his renown,
 Lay your earthly fancies down,
 And in the vast cathedral leave him.
 God accept him, Christ receive him.

THE DAISY

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH

[Composed 1853. — Published 1855.]

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,
 In lands of palm and southern pine;
 In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
 Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.
 What Roman strength Turbía show'd
 In ruin, by the mountain road;
 How like a gem, beneath, the city
 Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.
 How richly down the rocky dell
 The torrent vineyard streaming fell
 To meet the sun and sunny waters,
 That only heaved with a summer swell.
 What slender campanili grew
 By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;
 Where, here and there, on sandy beaches
 A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.
 How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
 Yet present in his natal grove,
 Now watching high on mountain cornice,
 And steering, now, from a purple cove,
 Now pacing mute by ocean's rim;
 Till, in a narrow street and dim,
 I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
 And drank, and loyally drank to him.
 Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
 Not the clipt palm of which they boast;
 But distant colour, happy hamlet,
 A moulder'd citadel on the coast,
 Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
 A light amid its olives green;
 Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
 Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,
 Where oleanders flush'd the bed
 Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;
 And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
 Of ice, far up on a mountain head.
 We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
 Those niched shapes of noble mould,
 A princely people's awful princes,
 The grave, severe Genovese of old.
 At Florence too what golden hours,
 In those long galleries, were ours;
 What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
 Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.
 In bright vignettes, and each complete,
 Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,
 Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
 Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.
 But when we crost the Lombard plain
 Remember what a plague of rain;
 Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma;
 At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain,

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
 Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles;
 Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
 And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
 The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
 The height, the space, the gloom, the
 glory!
 A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;
 Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.
 I stood among the silent statues,
 And statted pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
 Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
 A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
 And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
 To Como; shower and storm and blast
 Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
 And all was flooded; and how we past

From Como, when the light was grey,
 And in my head, for half the day,
 The rich Virgilian rustic measure
 Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
 As on the Lariano crept
 To that fair port below the castle
 Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
 A cypress in the moonlight shake,
 The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
 On tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
 And up the snowy Splügen drew,
 But ere we reach'd the highest summit
 I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
 And now it tells of Italy.
 O love, we two shall go no longer
 To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold
 Whose crying is a cry for gold:
 Yet here to-night in this dark city,
 When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,
 This nurseling of another sky
 Still in the little book you lent me,
 And where you tenderly laid it by:

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
 The gloom that saddens Heaven and Earth,
 The bitter east, the misty summer
 And grey metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
 Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
 Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
 My fancy fled to the South again.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

[1854]

I

HALF a league, half a league,
 Half a league onward,
 All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
 'Forward, the Light Brigade!
 Charge for the guns!' he said:
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

II

'Forward, the Light Brigade!
 Was there a man dismay'd?
 Not tho' the soldier knew
 Some one had blunder'd:
 Their's not to make reply,
 Their's not to reason why,
 Their's but to do and die:
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon in front of them
 Volley'd and thunder'd;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 Boldly they rode and well,
 Into the jaws of Death,
 Into the mouth of Hell
 Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
 Flash'd as they turn'd in air,
 Sabring the gunners there,
 Charging an army, while
 All the world wonder'd:
 Plunged in the battery-smoke
 Right thro' the line they broke;
 Cossack and Russian
 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
 Shatter'd and sunder'd.
 Then they rode back, but not,
 Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon behind them
 Volley'd and thunder'd;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 While horse and hero fell,
 They that had fought so well

Came thro' the jaws of Death
 Back from the mouth of Hell,
 All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?
 O the wild charge they made!
 All the world wonder'd.
 Honour the charge they made!
 Honour the Light Brigade,
 Noble six hundred!

SONG FROM THE BROOK

[1855]

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,
 I make a sudden sally
 And sparkle out among the fern,
 To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
 Or slip between the ridges,
 By twenty thorps, a little town,
 And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
 To join the brimming river,
 For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
 In little sharps and trebles,
 I bubble into eddying bays,
 I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I frēt
 By many a field and fallow,
 And many a fairy foreland set
 With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
 To join the brimming river,
 For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
 With here a blossom sailing,
 And here and there a lusty trout,
 And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
 Upon me, as I travel
 With many a silvery waterbreak
 Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
 To join the brimming river,
 For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
 I slide by hazel covers;
 I move the sweet forget-me-nots
 That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

MAUD

[1855]

PART I

I

I HATE the dreadful hollow behind the little
wood,
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with
blood-red heath,
The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent
horror of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her,
answers 'Death.'

II

For there in the ghastly pit long since a
body was found,
His who had given me life—O father! O
God! was it well?—
Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and
dinted into the ground:
There yet lies the rock that fell with him
when he fell.

III

Did he fling himself down? who knows?
for a vast speculation had fail'd,
And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and
ever wann'd with despair,
And out he walk'd when the wind like a
broken worldling wail'd,
And the flying gold of the ruin'd wood-
lands drove thro' the air.

IV

I remember the time, for the roots of my
hair were stirr'd
By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd,
by a whisper'd fright,
And my pulses closed their gates with a
shock on my heart as I heard
The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide
the shuddering night.

V

Villany somewhere! whose? One says, we
are villains all.
Not he: his honest fame should at least by
me be maintain'd:

But that old man, now lord of the broad
estate and the Hall,
Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had
left us flaccid and drain'd.

VI

Why do they prate of the blessings of
Peace? we have made them a curse,
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that
is not its own;
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is
it better or worse
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in
war on his own hearthstone?

VII

But these are the days of advance, the
works of the men of mind,
When who but a fool would have faith in
a tradesman's ware or his word?
Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think,
and that of a kind
The viler, as underhand, not openly bear-
ing the sword.

VIII

Sooner or later I too may passively take
the print
Of the golden age—why not? I have
neither hope nor trust;
May make my heart as a millstone, set my
face as a flint,
Cheat and be cheated, and die: who knows?
we are ashes and dust.

IX

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring
the days gone by,
When the poor are hovell'd and hustled
together, each sex, like swine,
When only the ledger lives, and when only
not all men lie;
Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a com-
pany forges the wine.

X

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the
ruffian's head,
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of
the trampled wife,
And chalk and alum and plaster are sold
to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the
very means of life,

XI

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the
villainous centre-bits
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of
the moonless nights,
While another is cheating the sick of a
few last gasps, as he sits
To pestle a poison'd poison behind his
crimson lights.

XII

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe
for a burial fee,
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of
children's bones,
Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war
by land and by sea,
War with a thousand battles, and shaking
a hundred thrones.

XIII

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder
round by the hill,
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the
three-decker out of the foam,
That the smooth-faced snubnosed rogue
would leap from his counter and till,
And strike, if he could, were it but with his
cheating yardwand, home. —

XIV

What! am I raging alone as my father
raged in his mood?
Must I too creep to the hollow and dash
myself down and die
Rather than hold by the law that I made,
nevermore to brood
On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a
wretched swindler's lie?

XV

Would there be sorrow for *me?* there was
love in the passionate shriek,
Love for the silent thing that had made
false haste to the grave —
Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and
thought he would rise and speak
And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God,
as he used to rave.

XVI

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am
sick of the moor and the main.
Why should I stay? can a sweeter chance
ever come to me here?
O, having the nerves of motion as well as
the nerves of pain,
Were it not wise if I fled from the place
and the pit and the fear?

XVII

Workmen up at the Hall! — they are com-
ing back from abroad;
The dark old place will be gilt by the
touch of a millionaire:
I have heard, I know not whence, of the
singular beauty of Maud;
I play'd with the girl when a child; she
promised then to be fair.

XVIII

Maud with her venturous climbings and
tumbles and childish escapes,
Maud the delight of the village, the ringing
joy of the Hall,

Maud with her sweet purse-mouth when
my father dangled the grapes,
Maud the beloved of my mother, the moon-
faced darling of all, —

XIX

What is she now? My dreams are bad.
She may bring me a curse.
No, there is fatter game on the moor;
she will let me alone.
Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether
woman or man be the worse.
I will bury myself in myself, and the Devil
may pipe to his own.

II

Long have I sigh'd for a calm; God grant
I may find it at last!
It will never be broken by Maud, she has
neither savour nor salt,
But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found
when her carriage past,
Perfectly beautiful: let it be granted her:
where is the fault?
All that I saw (for her eyes were down-
cast, not to be seen)
Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly
null. *Faint line*
Dead perfection, no more; nothing more,
if it had not been
For a chance of travel, a paleness, an
hour's defect of the rose.
Or an underlip, you may call it a little
too ripe, too full,
Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in
a sensitive nose,
From which I escaped heart-free, with the
least little touch of spleen.

III *Vision of the Night*

Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so
cruelly meek,
Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful
folly was drown'd,
Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash
dead on the cheek.
Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on
a gloom profound;
Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a
transient wrong
Done but in thought to your beauty, and
ever as pale as before
Growing and fading and growing upon me
without a sound,
Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike,
half the night long
Growing and fading and growing, till I
could bear it no more,
But arose, and all by myself in my own
dark garden ground,
Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung
shipwrecking roar,
Now to the scream of a madden'd beach
dragg'd down by the wave,

closing lines change slightly

Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly
glimmer, and found
The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low
in his grave.

IV *Glean*

I

Bitterness after
A million emeralds break from the ruby-
budded lime
In the little grove where I sit—ah, where-
fore cannot I be
Like things of the season gay, like the
bountiful season bland,
When the far-off sail is blown by the
breeze of a softer clime,
Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a
crescent of sea,
The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring
of the land?

II

Below me, there, is the village, and looks
how quiet and small!
And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gos-
sip, scandal, and spite;
And Jack on his ale-house bench has as
many lies as a Czar;
And here on the landward side, by a red
rock, glimmers the Hall;
And up in the high Hall-garden I see her
pass like a light;
But sorrow seize me if ever that light be
my leading star!

III

When have I bow'd to her father, the
wrinkled head of the race?
I met her to-day with her brother, but not
to her brother I bow'd;
I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by
on the moor;
But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over
her beautiful face.
O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it,
in being so proud;
Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I
am nameless and poor.

IV

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready
to slander and steal;
I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like
a stoic, or like
A wiser epicurean, and let the world have
its way:
For nature is one with rapine, a harm no
preacher can heal;
The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the
sparrow spear'd by the shrike,
And the whole little wood where I sit is a
world of plunder and prey.

V

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and
Beauty fair in her flower;
Do we move ourselves, or are moved by
an unseen hand at a game
That pushes us off from the board, and
others ever succeed?
Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other
here for an hour;
We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and
grin at a brother's shame;
However we brave it out, we men are a
little breed.

VI

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and
Master of Earth,
For him did his high sun flame, and his
river billowing ran,
And he felt himself in his force to be Na-
ture's crowning race.
As nine months go to the shaping an in-
fant ripe for his birth,
So many a million of ages have gone to
the making of man:
He now is first, but is he the last? is he
not too base?

VII

The man of science himself is fonder of
glory, and vain,
An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit
bounded and poor;
The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd
into folly and vice.
I would not marvel at either, but keep a
temperate brain;
For not to desire or admire, if a man
could learn it, were more
Than to walk all day like the sultan of old
in a garden of spice.

VIII

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis
hid by the veil.
Who knows the ways of the world, how
God will bring them about?
Our planet is one, the suns are many, the
world is wide.
Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I
shriek if a Hungary fail?
Or an infant civilization be ruled with rod
or with knout?
I have not made the world, and He that
made it will guide.

IX

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet
woodland ways,
Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless
peace be my lot,
Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in
the hubbub of lies;

"longing for calm"

From the long-neck'd geese of the world
that are ever hissing dispraise
Because their natures are little, and,
whether he heed it or not,
Where each man walks with his head in a
cloud of poisonous flies.

X

And most of all would I flee from the cruel
madness of love,
The honey of poison-flowers and all the
measureless ill.
Ah Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all
unmeet for a wife.
Your mother is mute in her grave as her
image in marble above;
Your father is ever in London, you wander
about at your will;
You have but fed on the roses, and lain
in the lilies of life.

V

*4 Fighting against his
growing passion*
A voice by the cedar tree,
In the meadow under the Hall!
She is singing an air that is known to me,
A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
A martial song like a trumpet's call!
Singing alone in the morning of life,
In the happy morning of life and of May,
Singing of men that in battle array,
Ready in heart and ready in hand,
March with banner and bugle and fife
To the death, for their native land.

II

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny
sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English
green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her
grace.
Singing of Death, and of Honour that
cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid
and mean,
And myself so languid and base

III

Silence, beautiful voice!
Be still, for you only trouble the mind
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
A glory I shall not find.
Still! I will hear you no more,
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a
choice
But to move to the meadow and fall before
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,
Not her, not her, but a voice.

VI

I

*first introduced with
Maud.*
Morning arises stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,
And the budded peaks of the wood are
bow'd
Caught and cuff'd by the gale:
I had fancied it would be fair.

II

Whom but Maud should I meet
Last night, when the sunset burn'd
On the blossom'd gable-ends
At the head of the village street,
Whom but Maud should I meet?
And she touch'd my hand with a smile so
sweet,
She made me divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd.

III

And thus a delicate spark
Of glowing and growing light
Thro' the livelong hours of the dark
Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame;
Till at last when the morning came
In a cloud, it faded, and seems
But an ashen-grey delight.

IV

What if with her sunny hair,
And smile as sunny as cold,
She meant to weave me a snare
Of some coquettish deceit,
Cleopatra-like as of old
To entangle me when we met,
To have her lion roll in a silken net
And fawn at a victor's feet.

V

Ah, what shall I be at fifty
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?
Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile were all that I dream'd
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VI

What if tho' her eye seem'd full
Of a kind intent to me,
What if that dandy-despot, he,
That jewell'd mass of millinery,
That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence,
Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,
Who wants the finer politic sense
To mask, tho' but in his own behoof

With a glassy smile his brutal scorn —
 What if he had told her yestermorn
 How prettily for his own sweet sake
 A face of tenderness might be feign'd,
 And a moist mirage in desert eyes,
 That so, when the rotten hustings shake
 In another month to his brazen lies,
 A wretched vote may be gain'd.

VII

For a raven ever croaks, at my side,
 Keep watch and ward, keep watch and
 ward,
 Or thou wilt prove their tool.
 Yea, too, myself from myself I guard,
 For often a man's own angry pride
 Is cap and bells for a fool.

VIII

Perhaps the smile and tender tone
 Came out of her pitying womanhood,
 For am I not, am I not, here alone
 So many a summer since she died,
 My mother, who was so gentle and good?
 Living alone in an empty house,
 Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,
 Where I hear the dead at midday moan,
 And the shrieking rush of the wainscot
 mouse,
 And my own sad name in corners cried,
 When the shiver of dancing leaves is
 thrown
 About its echoing chambers wide,
 Till a morbid hate and horror have grown
 Of a world in which I have hardly mixt,
 And a morbid eating lichen fixt
 On a heart half-turn'd to stone.

IX

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
 By that you swore to withstand?
 For what was it else within me wrought
 But, I fear, the new strong wine of love.
 That made my tongue so stammer and
 trip
 When I saw the treasured splendour, her
 hand,
 Come sliding out of her sacred glove,
 And the sunlight broke from her lip?

x

I have play'd with her when a child;
 She remembers it now we meet.
 Ah well, well, well, I may be beguiled
 By some coquettish deceit.
 Yet, if she were not a cheat,
 If Maud were all that she seem'd,
 And her smile had all that I dream'd,
 Then the world were not so bitter
 But a smile could make it sweet.

VII

... he saw his father's calling quiet before birth to him
 I
 Did I hear it half in a doze
 Long since, I know not where?
 Did I dream it an hour ago,
 When asleep in this arm-chair?

II

Men were drinking together,
 Drinking and talking of me;
 'Well, if it prove a girl, the boy
 Will have plenty: so let it be.'

III

Is it an echo of something
 Read with a boy's delight,
 Viziers nodding together
 In some Arabian night?

IV

Strange, that I hear two men,
 Somewhere, talking of me;
 'Well, if it prove a girl, my boy
 Will have plenty: so let it be.'

VIII

... she did not return his love
 She came to the village church,
 And sat by a pillar alone;
 An angel watching an urn
 Wept over her, carved in stone;
 And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,
 And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd
 To find they were met by my own;
 And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat
 stronger
 And thicker, until I heard no longer
 The snowy-banded, dilettante,
 Delicate-handed priest intone;
 And thought, is it pride, and mused and
 sigh'd
 'No surely, now it cannot be pride.'

IX

... not sight of young Lord
 I was walking a mile,
 More than a mile from the shore,
 The sun look'd out with a smile
 Betwixt the cloud and the moor,
 And riding at set of day
 Over the dark moor land,
 Rapidly riding far away,
 She waved to me with her hand.
 There were two at her side,
 Something flash'd in the sun,
 Down by the hill I saw them ride,
 In a moment they were gone:
 Like a sudden spark
 Struck vainly in the night,
 Then returns the dark
 With no more hope of light.

X

I

Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?
 Was not one of the two at her side
 This new-made lord, whose splendour
 plucks
 The slavish hat from the villager's head?
 Whose old grandfather has lately died,
 Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
 Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
 And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom
 Wrought, till he crept from a gutted mine
 Master of half a servile shire,
 And left his coal all turn'd into gold
 To a grandson, first of his noble line,
 Rich in the grace all women desire,
 Strong in the power that all men adore,
 And simper and set their voices lower,
 And soften as if to a girl, and hold
 Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,
 Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,
 New as his title, built last year,
 There amid perky larches and pine,
 And over the sullen-purple moor
 (Look at it) pricking a cockney ear.

II

What, has he found my jewel out?
 For one of the two that rode at her side
 Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he:
 Bound for the Hall, and I think for a bride.
 Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.
 Maud could be gracious too, no doubt,
 To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,
 A bought commission, a waxen face,
 A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—
 Bought? what is it he cannot buy?
 And therefore splenetic, personal, base,
 A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,
 At war with myself and a wretched race,
 Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

III

Last week came one to the county town,
 To preach our poor little army down,
 And play the game of the despot kings,
 Tho' the state has done it and thrice as
 well:
 This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,
 Whose ear is cramm'd with his cotton, and
 rings
 Even in dreams to the chink of his pence,
 This huckster put down war! can he tell
 Whether war be a cause or a consequence?
 Put down the passions that make earth
 Hell!
 Down with ambition, avarice, pride,
 Jealousy, down! cut off from the mind
 The bitter springs of anger and fear;
 Down too, down at your own fireside,
 With the evil tongue and the evil ear,
 For each is at war with mankind.

IV

I wish I could hear again
 The chivalrous battle-song
 That she warbled alone in her joy!
 I might persuade myself then
 She would not do herself this great wrong,
 To take a wanton dissolute boy
 For a man and leader of men.

V

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
 Like some of the simple great ones gone
 For ever and ever by,
 One still strong man in a blatant land,
 Whatever they call him, what care I,
 Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
 Who can rule and dare not lie.

VI

And ah for a man to arise in me,
 That the man I am may cease to be!

XI

I

O let the solid ground
 Not fail beneath my feet
 Before my life has found
 What some have found so sweet;
 Then let come what come may,
 What matter if I go mad,
 I shall have had my day.

II

Let the sweet heavens endure,
 Not close and darken above me
 Before I am quite quite sure
 That there is one to love me;
 Then let come what come may
 To a life that has been so sad,
 I shall have had my day.

XII

I

Birds in the high Hall-garden
 When twilight was falling,
 Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
 They were crying and calling.

II

Where was Maud? in our wood;
 And I, who else, was with her,
 Gathering woodland lilies,
 Myriads blow together.

III

Birds in our wood sang
 Ringing thro' the valleys,
 Maud is here, here, here
 In among the lilies.

IV

I kiss'd her slender hand,
She took the kiss sedately;
Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

V

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour!
O Maud were sure of Heaven
If lowliness could save her.

VI

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touch'd the meadows
And left the daisies rosy.

VII

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?
One is come to woo her.

VIII

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charley snarling,
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

XIII.

I

Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?
That a calamity hard to be borne?
Well, he may live to hate me yet.
Fool that I am to be vex't with his pride!
I past him, I was crossing his lands;
He stood on the path a little aside;
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and
white,
And six feet two, as I think, he stands;
But his essences turn'd the live air sick,
And barbarous opulence jewel-thick
Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

II

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair,
I long'd so heartily then and there
To give him the grasp of fellowship;
But while I past he was humming an air,
Stopt, and then with a riding whip
Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
And curving a contumelious lip,
Gorgonized me from head to foot
With a stony British stare.

III

Why sits he here in his father's chair?
That old man never comes to his place:
Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen?
For only once, in the village street,

Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,
A grey old wolf and a lean.
Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat;
For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,
She might by a true descent be untrue;
And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet:
Tho' I fancy her sweetness only due
To the sweeter blood by the other side;
Her mother has been a thing complete,
However she came to be so allied.
And fair without, faithful within,
Maud to him is nothing akin:
Some peculiar mystic grace
Made her only the child of her mother,
And heap'd the whole inherited sin
On that huge scapegoat of the race,
All, all upon the brother.

IV

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
Has not his sister smiled on me?

XIV

I

Maud has a garden of roses
And lilies fair on a lawn;
There she walks in her state
And tends upon bed and bower,
And thither I climb'd at dawn
And stood by her garden-gate;
A lion ramps at the top,
He is clapt by a passion-flower.

II

Maud's own little oak-room
(Which Maud, like a precious stone
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,
Lights with herself, when alone
She sits by her music and books,
And her brother lingers late
With a roystering company) looks
Upon Maud's own garden-gate:
And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as
white
As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid
On the hasp of the window, and my
Delight
Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost,
to glide,
Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down
to my side,
There were but a step to be made.

III

The fancy flatter'd my mind,
And again seem'd overbold;
Now I thought that she cared for me,
Now I thought she was kind
Only because she was cold.

IV

I heard no sound where I stood:
But the rivulet on from the lawn

Running down to my own dark wood;
Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it
swell'd
Now and then in the dim-grey dawn;
But I look'd, and round, all round the
house I beheld
The death-white curtain drawn;
Felt a horror over me creep,
Prickle my skin and catch my breath,
Knew that the death-white curtain meant
but sleep,
Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool
of the sleep of death.

XV

So dark a mind within me dwells,
And I make myself such evil cheer,
That if I be dear to some one else,
Then some one else may have much to
fear;
But if I be dear to some one else,
Then I should be to myself more dear.
Shall I not take care of all that I think,
Yea, ev'n of wretched meat and drink,
If I be dear,
If I be dear to some one else.

XVI

This lump of earth has left his estate
The lighter by the loss of his weight;
And so that he find what he went to
seek,
And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and drown
His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,
He may stay for a year who has gone for
a week:
But this is the day when I must speak,
And I see my Oread coming down,
O this is the day!
O beautiful creature, what am I
That I dare to look her way;
Think I may hold dominion sweet,
Lord of the pulse that is lord of her
breast,
And dream of her beauty with tender
dread,
From the delicate Arab arch of her feet
To the grace that, bright and light as the
crest
Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,
And she knows it not: O, if she knew it,
To know her beauty might half undo it.
I know it the one bright thing to save
My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
Perhaps from madness, perhaps from
crime,
Perhaps from a selfish grave.

II

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,
Dare I bid her abide by her word?

Should I love her so well if she
Had given her word to a thing so low?
Shall I love her as well if she
Can break her word were it even for me?
I trust that it is not so.

III

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,
Let not my tongue be a thrall to my
eye,
For I must tell her before we part,
I must tell her, or die.

XVII

Go not, happy day,
From the shining fields,
Go not, happy day,
Till the maiden yields.
Rosy is the West,
Rosy is the South,
Roses are her cheeks,
And a rose her mouth.
When the happy Yes
Falters from her lips,
Pass and blush the news
O'er the blowing ships.
Over blowing seas,
Over seas at rest,
Pass the happy news,
Blush it thro' the West;
Till the red man dance
By his red cedar tree,
And the red man's babe
Leap, beyond the sea.
Blush from West to East,
Blush from East to West,
Till the West is East,
Blush it thro' the West.
Rosy is the West,
Rosy is the South,
Roses are her cheeks,
And a rose her mouth.

XVIII

I have led her home, my love, my only
friend.
There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on
Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
Full to the banks, close on the promised
good.

II

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering
talk
Seem'd her light foot along the garden
walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes
once more;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she
is gone.

III

splendid
 There is none like her, none.
 Nor will be when our summers have de-
 ceased.
 O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
 In the long breeze that streams to thy
 delicious East,
 Sighing for Lebanon,
 Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here in-
 creased,
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
 And looking to the South, and fed
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,
 And haunted by the starry head
 Of her whose gentle will has changed my
 fate,
 And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
 And over whom thy darkness must have
 spread
 With such delight as theirs of old, thy
 great
 Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
 Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from
 whom she came.

IV

splendid
 Here will I lie, while these long branches
 sway,
 And you fair stars that crown a happy day
 Go in and out as if at merry play,
 Who am no more so all forlorn,
 As when it seem'd far better to be born
 To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand,
 Than nursed at ease and brought to under-
 stand
 A sad astrology, the boundless plan
 That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
 Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
 Cold fires, yet with power to burn and
 brand
 His nothingness into man.

V

But now shine on, and what care I,
 Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl
 The countercharm of space and hollow sky,
 And do accept my madness, and would die
 To save from some slight shame one sim-
 ple girl.

VI

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death may
 give
 More life to Love than is or ever was
 In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to
 live.

Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
 It seems that I am happy, that to me
 A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
 A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII

Not die; but live a life of truest breath,
 And teach true life to fight with mortal
 wrongs.

O, why should Love, like men in drinking-
 songs,
 Spice his fair banquet with the dust of
 death?
 Make answer, Maud my bliss,
 Maud made my Maud by that long lover's
 kiss,
 Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?
 'The dusky strand of Death inwoven here
 With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself
 more dear.'

VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
 Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
 And hark the clock within, the silver knell
 Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal
 white,
 And died to live, long as my pulses play;
 But now by this my love has closed her
 sight
 And given false death her hand, and stol'n
 away
 To dreamful wastes where footless fancies
 dwell
 Among the fragments of the golden day.
 May nothing there her maiden grace af-
 fright!
 Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy
 spell.
 My bride to be, my evermore delight,
 My own heart's heart and ownest own,
 farewell;
 It is but for a little space I go:
 And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
 Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
 Has our whole earth gone nearer to the
 glow
 Of your soft splendours that you look so
 bright?
 I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
 Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
 Beat with my heart more blest than heart
 can tell,
 Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
 That seems to draw—but it shall not be
 so:
 Let all be well, be well. *Dramatic irony*
as in "Romeo & J."

XIX

I

Her brother is coming back to-night,
 Breaking up my dream of delight.

II

My dream? do I dream of bliss?
 I have walk'd awake with Truth.
 O when did a morning shine
 So rich in atonement as this
 For my dark-dawning youth,
 Darken'd watching a mother decline
 And that dead man at her heart and mine:
 For who was left to watch her but I?
 Yet so did I let my freshness die.

III

I trust that I did not talk
 To gentle Maud in our walk
 (For often in lonely wanderings
 I have cursed him even to lifeless things)
 But I trust that I did not talk,
 Not touch on her father's sin:
 I am sure I did but speak
 Of my mother's faded cheek
 When it slowly grew so thin,
 That I felt she was slowly dying
 Vext with lawyers and harass'd with debt:
 For how often I caught her with eyes all
 wet,
 Shaking her head at her son and sighing
 A world of trouble within!

IV

And Maud too, Maud was moved
 To speak of the mother she loved
 As one scarce less forlorn,
 Dying abroad and it seems apart
 From him who had ceased to share her
 heart,
 And ever mourning over the feud,
 The household Fury sprinkled with blood
 By which our houses are torn:
 How strange was what she said,
 When only Maud and the brother
 Hung over her dying bed —
 That Maud's dark father and mine
 Had bound us one to the other,
 Betrothed us over their wine,
 On the day when Maud was born;
 Seal'd her mine from her first sweet breath.
 Mine, mine by a right, from birth till death,
 Mine, mine — our fathers have sworn.

V

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat
 To dissolve the precious seal on a bond,
 That, if left uncancell'd, had been so sweet:
 And none of us thought of a something
 beyond,
 A desire that awoke in the heart of the
 child,
 As it were a duty done to the tomb,
 To be friends for her sake, to be reconciled;
 And I was cursing them and my doom,
 And letting a dangerous thought run wild
 While often abroad in the fragrant gloom
 Of foreign churches — I see her there,
 Bright English lily, breathing a prayer
 To be friends, to be reconciled!

VI

But then what a flint is he!
 Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,
 I find whenever she touch'd on me
 This brother had laugh'd her down,
 And at last, when each came home,
 He had darken'd into a frown,

Chid her, and forbid her to speak
 To me, her friend of the years before;
 And this was what had reddened her cheek
 When I bow'd to her on the moor.

VII

Yet Maud, altho' not blind
 To the faults of his heart and mind,
 I see she cannot but love him,
 And says he is rough but kind,
 And wishes me to approve him,
 And tells me, when she lay
 Sick once, with a fear of worse,
 That he left his wine and horses and play,
 Sat with her, read to her, night and day,
 And tended her like a nurse.

VIII

Kind? but the deathbed desire
 Spurn'd by this heir of the liar —
 Rough but kind? yet I know
 He has plotted against me in this,
 That he plots against me still.
 Kind to Maud? that were not amiss.
 Well, rough but kind; why let it be so:
 For shall not Maud have her will?

IX

For, Maud, so tender and true,
 As long as my life endures
 I feel I shall owe you a debt,
 That I never can hope to pay;
 And if ever I should forget
 That I owe this debt to you
 And for your sweet sake to yours;
 O then, what then shall I say? —
 If ever I should forget,
 May God make me more wretched
 Than ever I have been yet!

X

So now I have sworn to bury
 All this dead body of hate,
 I feel so free and so clear
 By the loss of that dead weight,
 That I should grow light-headed, I fear,
 Fantastically merry;
 But that her brother comes, like a blight
 On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

XX

I

Strange, that I felt so gay,
 Strange, that I tried to-day
 To beguile her melancholy;
 The Sultan, as we name him, —
 She did not wish to blame him —
 But he vexed her and perplexed her
 With his worldly talk and folly:
 Was it gentle to reprove her
 For stealing out of view
 From a little lazy lover
 Who but claims her as his due?

Or for chilling his caresses
By the coldness of her manners,
Nay, the plainness of her dresses?
Now I know her but in two,
Nor can pronounce upon it
If one should ask me whether
The habit, hat, and feather,
Or the frock and gipsy bonnet
Be the neater and completer;
For nothing can be sweeter
Than maiden Maud in either.

II

But to-morrow, if we live,
Our ponderous squire will give
A grand political dinner
To half the squirelings near;
And Maud will wear her jewels,
And the bird of prey will hover,
And the titmouse hope to win her
With his chirrup at her ear.

III

A grand political dinner
To the men of many acres,
A gathering of the Tory,
A dinner and then a dance
For the maids and marriage-makers,
And every eye but mine will glance
At Maud in all her glory.

IV

For I am not invited,
But, with the Sultan's pardon,
I am all as well delighted,
For I know her own rose-garden,
And mean to linger in it
Till the dancing will be over;
And then, oh then, come out to me
For a minute, but for a minute,
Come out to your own true lover,
That your true lover may see
Your glory also, and render
All homage to his own darling,
Queen Maud in all her splendour.

XXI *Before the Bell*

Rivulet crossing my ground,
And bringing me down from the Hall
This garden-rose that I found,
Forgetful of Maud and me,
And lost in trouble and moving round
Here at the head of a tinkling fall,
And trying to pass to the sea;
O Rivulet, born at the Hall,
My Maud has sent it by thee
(If I read her sweet will right)
On a blushing mission to me,
Saying in odour and colour, 'Ah, be
Among the roses to-night.'

XXII *In "Bell Garden"*

I

Just called in
Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.

II

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she
loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light, and to die.

III

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine
stirr'd
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

IV

I said to the lily, 'There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play.'
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

V

I said to the rose, 'The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine,' so I sware to the
rose,
'For ever and ever, mine.'

VI

And the soul of the rose went into my
blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to
the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

VII

From the meadow your walks have left so
sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

VIII

The slender acacia would not shake
 One long milk-bloom on the tree;
 The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
 As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
 But the rose was awake all night for your
 sake,
 Knowing your promise to me;
 The lilies and roses were all awake,
 They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

IX

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
 Come hither, the dances are done,
 In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
 Queen lily and rose in one;
 Shine out, little head, sunning over with
 curls,
 To the flowers, and be their sun.

X

There has fallen a splendid tear
 From the passion-flower at the gate.
 She is coming, my dove, my dear;
 She is coming, my life, my fate;
 The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is
 near,'
 And the white rose weeps, 'She is late.'
 The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear';
 And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

XI

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
 Were it ever so airy a tread,
 My heart would hear her and beat,
 Were it earth in an earthy bed;
 My dust would hear her and beat,
 Had I lain for a century dead;
 Would start and tremble under her feet
 And blossom in purple and red.

PART II

I

I

'The fault was mine, the fault was mine'—
 Why am I sitting here so stunn'd and still,
 Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the
 hill?—
 It is this guilty hand!—
 And there rises ever a passionate cry
 From underneath in the darkening land—
 What is it, that has been done?
 O dawn of Eden bright over earth and
 sky,
 The fires of Hell brake out of thy rising
 sun,
 The fires of Hell and of Hate;
 For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a
 word,
 When her brother ran in his rage to the
 gate,

He came with the babe-faced lord;
 Heap'd on her terms of disgrace,
 And while she wept, and I strove to be
 cool,
 He fiercely gave me the lie,
 Till I with as fierce an anger spoke,
 And he struck me, madman, over the face,
 Struck me before the languid fool,
 Who was gaping and grinning by:
 Struck for himself an evil stroke;
 Wrought for his house an irredeemable
 woe;

For front to front in an hour we stood,
 And a million horrible bellowing echoes
 broke
 From the red-ribb'd hollow behind the
 wood,
 And thunder'd up into Heaven the Christ-
 less code,
 That must have life for a blow.
 Ever and ever afresh they seem'd to grow.
 Was it he lay there with a fading eye?
 'The fault was mine,' he whisper'd, 'fly!'
 Then glided out of the joyous wood
 The ghastly Wraith of one that I know;
 And there rang on a sudden a passionate
 cry,
 A cry for a brother's blood:
 It will ring in my heart and my ears, till
 I die, till I die.

II

Is it gone? my pulses beat—
 What was it? a lying trick of the brain?
 Yet I thought I saw her stand,
 A shadow there at my feet,
 High over the shadowy land.
 It is gone; and the heavens fall in a gentle
 rain,
 When they should burst and drown with
 deluging storms
 The feeble vassals of wine and anger
 and lust,
 The little hearts that know not how to
 forgive:
 Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold
 Thee just,
 Strike dead the whole weak race of venom-
 ous worms,
 That sting each other here in the dust;
 We are not worthy to live.

II

I

See what a lovely shell,
 Small and pure as a pearl,
 Lying close to my foot,
 Frail, but a work divine,
 Made so fairly well
 With delicate spire and whorl,
 How exquisitely minute,
 A miracle of design!

II

What is it? a learned man
Could give it a clumsy name.
Let him name it who can,
The beauty would be the same.

III

The tiny cell is forlorn,
Void of the little living will
That made it stir on the shore.
Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Thro' his dim water-world?

IV

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand,
Small, but a work divine,
Frail, but of force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-decker's oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock,
Here on the Breton stran

V

Breton, not Briton; here
Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast
Of ancient fable and fear—
Plagued with a flitting to and fro,
A disease, a hard mechanic ghost
That never came from on high
Nor ever arose from below,
But only moves with the moving eye,
Flying along the land and the main—
Why should it look like Maud?
Am I to be overawed
By what I cannot but know
Is a juggle born of the brain?

VI

Back from the Breton coast,
Sick of a nameless fear,
Back to the dark sea-line
Looking, thinking of all I have lost;
An old song vexes my ear;
But that of Lamech is mine.

VII

For years, a measureless ill,
For years, for ever, to part—
But she, she would love me still;
And as long, O God, as she
Have a grain of love for me,
So long, no doubt, no doubt,
Shall I nurse in my dark heart,
However weary, a spark of will
Not to be trampled out.

VIII

Strange, that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense

One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye,—
That it should, by being so overwrought.
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell, or a flower, little things
Which else would have been past by!
And now I remember, I,
When he lay dying there,
I noticed one of his many rings
(For he had many, poor worm) and
thought
It is his mother's hair.

IX

Who knows if he be dead?
Whether I need have fled?
Am I guilty of blood?
However this may be,
Comfort her, comfort her, all things good,
While I am over the sea!
Let me and my passionate love go by,
But speak to her all things holy and high,
Whatever happen to me!
Me and my harmful love go by;
But come to her waking, find her asleep,
Powers of the height, Powers of the deep,
And comfort her tho' I die.

he felt self going mad.

III

Courage, poor heart of stone!
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone:
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply:
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

insanely after Maud's death.

IV

I
O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!

II

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
By the home that gave me birth,
We stood tranced in long embraces
Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter
Than any thing on earth.

III

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee;
Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

IV

It leads me forth at evening,
It lightly winds and steals
In a cold white robe before me,
When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
And the roaring of the wheels.

V

Half the night I waste in sighs,
Half in dreams I sorrow after
The delight of early skies;
In a wakeful doze I sorrow
For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
For the meeting of the morrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.

VI

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And a dewy splendour falls
On the little flower that clings
To the turrets and the walls;
'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And the light and shadow fleet;
She is walking in the meadow,
And the woodland echo rings;
In a moment we shall meet;
She is singing in the meadow,
And the rivulet at her feet
Ripples on in light and shadow
To the ballad that she sings.

VII

Do I hear her sing as of old,
My bird with the shining head,
My own dove with the tender eye?
But there rings on a sudden a passionate
cry,

There is some one dying or dead,
And a sullen thunder is roll'd;
For a tumult shakes the city,
And I wake, my dream is fled;
In the shuddering dawn, behold,
Without knowledge, without pity,
By the curtains of my bed
That abiding phantom cold.

VIII

Get thee hence, nor come again,
Mix not memory with doubt,
Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,
Pass and cease to move about!
'Tis the blot upon the brain
That will show itself without:

IX

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,
And the yellow vapours choke
The great city sounding wide;
The day comes, a dull red ball
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke
On the misty river-tide.

X

Thro' the hubbub of the market
I steal, a wasted frame,
It crosses here, it crosses there,
Thro' all that crowd confused and loud,
The shadow still the same;
And on my heavy eyelids
My anguish hangs like shame.

XI

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
Came glimmering thro' the laurels
At the quiet evenfall,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old manorial hall.

XII

Would the happy spirit descend,
From the realms of light and song,
In the chamber or the street,
As she looks among the blest,
Should I fear to greet my friend
Or to say 'forgive the wrong,'
Or to ask her, 'take me, sweet,
To the regions of thy rest'?

XIII

But the broad light glares and beats,
And the shadow flits and fleets
And will not let me be;
And I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me:
Always I long to creep
Into some still cavern deep,
There to weep, and weep, and weep
My whole soul out to thee.

V "In madhouse"

I

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing
feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and
clatter,
And here beneath it is all as bad,
For I thought the dead had peace, but it
is not so;
To have no peace in the grave, is that not
sad?

But up and down and to and fro,
 Ever about me the dead men go;
 And then to hear a dead man chatter
 Is enough to drive one mad.

II

Wretchedest age, since Time began,
 They cannot even bury a man;
 And tho' we paid our tithes in the days
 that are gone,
 Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read;
 It is that which makes us loud in the
 world of the dead;
 There is none that does his work, not one;
 A touch of their office might have sufficed,
 But the churchmen fain would kill their
 church,
 As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

III

See, there is one of us sobbing,
 No limit to his distress;
 And another, a lord of all things, praying
 To his own great self, as I guess;
 And another, a statesman there, betraying
 His party-secret, fool, to the press;
 And yonder a vile physician, blabbing
 The case of his patient—all for what?
 To tickle the maggot born in an empty
 head,
 And wheedle a world that loves him not,
 For it is but a world of the dead.

IV

Nothing but idiot gabble!
 For the prophecy given of old
 And then not understood,
 Has come to pass as foretold;
 Not let any man think for the public good,
 But babble, merely for babble.
 For I never whisper'd a private affair
 Within the hearing of cat or mouse,
 No, not to myself in the closet alone,
 But I heard it shouted at once from the
 top of the house;
 Everything came to be known:
 Who told *him* we were there?

V

Not that grey old wolf, for he came not
 back
 From the wilderness, full of wolves, where
 he used to lie;
 He has gather'd the bones for his o'er-
 grown whelp to crack;
 Crack them now for yourself, and howl,
 and die.

VI

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,
 And curse me the British vermin, the rat;
 I know not whether he came in the Han-
 over ship,
 But I know that he lies and listens mute

In an ancient mansion's crannies and holes:
 Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,
 Except that now we poison our babes,
 poor souls!

It is all used up for that.

VII

Tell him now: she is standing here at my
 head;
 Not beautiful now, not even kind;
 He may take her now; for she never speaks
 her mind,
 But is ever the one thing silent here.
 She is not of us, as I divine;
 She comes from another stiller world of
 the dead,
 Stiller, not fairer than mine.

VIII

But I know where a garden grows,
 Fairer than aught in the world beside,
 All made up of the lily and rose
 That blow by night, when the season is
 good,
 To the sound of dancing music and flutes:
 It is only flowers, they had no fruits,
 And I almost fear they are not roses, but
 blood;
 For the keeper was one, so full of pride,
 He linkt a dead man there to a spectral
 bride;
 For he, if he had not been a Sultan of
 brutes,
 Would he have that hole in his side?

IX

But what will the old man say?
 He laid a cruel snare in a pit
 To catch a friend of mine one stormy day;
 Yet now I could even weep to think of it;
 For what will the old man say
 When he comes to the second corpse in the
 pit?

X

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,
 Then to strike him and lay him low,
 That were a public merit, far,
 Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin;
 But the red life spilt for a private blow—
 I swear to you, lawful and lawless war
 Are scarcely even akin.

XI

O me, why have they not buried me deep
 enough?
 Is it kind to have made me a grave so
 rough,
 Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?
 Maybe still I am but half-dead;
 Then I cannot be wholly dumb;
 I will cry to the steps above my head,
 And somebody, surely, some kind heart
 will come
 To bury me, bury me
 Deeper, ever so little deeper.

PART III

VI

I

My life has crept so long on a broken wing
Thro' cells of madness, haunts of horror
and fear,
That I come to be grateful at last for a
little thing:
My mood is changed, for it fell at a time
of year
When the face of night is fair on the
dewy downs,
And the shining daffodil dies, and the
Charioteer
And starry Gemini hang like glorious
crowns
Over Orion's grave low down in the west,
That like a silent lightning under the stars
She seem'd to divide in a dream from a
band of the blest,
And spoke of a hope for the world in the
coming wars —
'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble
have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee,' and pointed to
Mars
As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the
Lion's breast.

II

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a
dear delight
To have look'd, tho' but in a dream, upon
eyes so fair,
That had been in a weary world my one
thing bright;
And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd
my despair
When I thought that a war would arise in
defence of the right,
That an iron tyranny now should bend or
cease,
The glory of manhood stand on his an-
cient height,
Nor Britain's one sole God be the million-
aire:
No more shall commerce be all in all, and
Peace
Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
And watch her harvest ripen, her herd in-
crease,
Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful
shore,
And the cobweb woven across the cannon's
throat
Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind
no more.

III

And as months ran on and rumour of
battle grew.
'It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,'
said I

(For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be
pure and true),
'It is time, O passionate heart and morbid
eye,
That old hysterical mock-disease should die.'
And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd
my breath
With a loyal people shouting a battle cry,
Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly
Far into the North, and battle, and seas of
death.

IV

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher
aims
Of a land that has lost for a little her lust
of gold,
And love of a peace that was full of
wrongs and shames,
Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be
told;
And hail once more to the banner of battle
unroll'd!
Tho' many a light shall darken, and many
shall weep
For those that are crush'd in the clash of
jarring claims,
Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on
a giant liar;
And many a darkness into the light shall
leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splen-
did names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one
desire;
For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is
over and done,
And now by the side of the Black and the
Baltic deep,
And deathful-grinning mouths of the for-
tress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart
of fire.

V

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down
like a wind,
We have proved we have hearts in a cause,
we are noble still,
And myself have awaked, as it seems, to
the better mind;
It is better to fight for the good, than to
rail at the ill;
I have felt with my native land, I am one
with my kind,
I embrace the purpose of God, and the
doom assign'd.

TITHONUS

[Published 1860. — Composed much earlier]

THE woods decay, the woods decay and
fall,
The vapors weep their burthen to the
ground,

"Tithonus has all, & more than all, the magic of the earlier
poems in the rendering of a passionate mood in a setting of
exquisite natural descriptions."

Man comes and tills the field and lies
beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a
dream
The ever silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of
morn.

Alas! for this grey shadow, once a
man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he
seem'd
To his great heart none other than a
God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a
smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they
give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd
their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted
me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me
maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill
with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy
gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet
for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there
comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was
born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer
steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoul-
ders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to
mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild
team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke,
arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd
manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy
tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be
true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their
gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt
my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd
all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-
warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that
kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and
sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled
feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when
the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the
homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my
grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

[Composed 1861 — Published 1864.]

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest
white,
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of
the night,
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty
years ago.
All along the valley while I walk'd to-day,
The two and thirty years were a mist that
rolls away;

For all along the valley, down thy rocky
bed
Thy living voice to me was as the voice
of the dead,
And all along the valley, by rock and
cave and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to
me.

THE SAILOR BOY

[1861]

He rose at dawn and, fired with hope,
Shot o'er the 'seething harbour-bar,
And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,
And whistled to the morning star.

And while he whistled long and loud
He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,
'O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,
I see the place where thou wilt lie.

'The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay,
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.'

'Fool,' he answer'd, 'death is sure
To those that stay and those that roam,
But I will nevermore endure
To sit with empty hands at home.

'My mother clings about my neck,
My sisters crying, "Stay for shame;"
My father raves of death and wreck,—
They are all to blame, they are all to
blame.

'God help me! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me.'

MILTON

Alcaics

*classical
meters*

[1864]

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palmwoods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

*1st 2 changes given Milton, Titan
giant of P. Inst.
2nd given scene of Eden.*

THE VOYAGE

[1864]

We left behind the painted buoy
That tosses at the harbour-mouth;
And madly danced our hearts with joy,
As fast we fled to the South:
How fresh was every sight and sound
On open main or winding shore!
We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for evermore.

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail:
The Lady's head upon the prow
Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the
gale.

The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,
And swept behind: so quick the run,
We felt the good ship shake and reel,
We seem'd to sail into the Sun!

How oft we saw the Sun retire,
And burn the threshold of the night,
Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,
And sleep beneath his pillar'd light!
How oft the purple-skirted robe
Of twilight slowly downward drawn,
As thro' the slumber of the globe
Again we dash'd into the dawn!

New stars all night above the brim
Of waters lighten'd into view;
They climb'd as quickly, for the rim
'Changed every moment as we flew.
Far ran the naked moon across
The houseless ocean's heaving field,
Or flying shone, the silver boss
Of her own halo's dusky shield;

The peaky islet shifted shapes,
High towns on hills were dimly seen,
We past long lines of Northern capes
And dewy Northern meadows green.
We came to warmer waves, and deep
Across the boundless east we drove,
Where those long swells of breaker sweep
The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,
Gloom'd the low coast and quivering
brine
With ashy rains, that spreading made
Fantastic plume or sable pine;
By sands and steaming flats, and floods
Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,
And hills and scarlet-mingled woods
Glow'd for a moment as we past.

O hundred shores of happy climes,
How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark!
At times the whole sea burn'd, at times
With wakes of fire, we tore the dark;

At times a carven craft would shoot
From havens hid in fairy bowers,
With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

For one fair Vision ever fled
Down the waste waters day and night,
And still we follow'd where she led,
In hope to gain upon her flight.
Her face was evermore unseen,
And fixt upon the far sea-line;
But each man murmur'd 'O my Queen,
I follow till I make thee mine.'

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd
Like Fancy made of golden air,
Now nearer to the prow she seem'd
Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,
Now high on waves that idly burst
Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the sea,
And now, the bloodless point reversed,
She bore the blade of Liberty.

And only one among us — him
We pleased not — he was seldom pleased:
He saw not far: his eyes were dim:
But ours he swore were all diseased.
'A ship of fools' he shriek'd in spite,
'A ship of fools' he sneer'd and wept.
And overboard one stormy night
He cast his body, and on we swept.

And never sail of ours was furl'd,
Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn;
We loved the glories of the world,
But laws of nature were our scorn;
For blasts would rise and rave and cease,
But whence were those that drove the sail

Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,
And to and thro' the counter-gale?

Again to colder climes we came,
For still we follow'd where she led:
Now mate is blind and captain lame,
And half the crew are sick or dead.
But blind or lame or sick or sound
We follow that which flies before:
We know the merry world is round,
And we may sail for evermore.

THE FLOWER

[1864]

ONCE in a golden hour
I cast to earth a seed.
Up there came a flower,
The people said, a weed.

To and fro they went
Thro' my garden-bower,
And muttering discontent
Cursed me and my flower.

Then it grew so tall
It wore a crown of light,
But thieves from o'er the wall
Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide
By every town and tower,
Till all the people cried
'Splendid is the flower.'

Read my little fable:
He that runs may read.
Most can raise the flowers now,
For all have got the seed.

And some are pretty enough,
And some are poor indeed;
And now again the people
Call it but a weed.

Sketch of a flower
ENOCH ARDEN

[1864]

Long lines of cliff breaking have left a
chasm;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow
sands;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster; then a moulder'd church; and
higher
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd
mill;
And high in heaven behind it a grey down
With Danish barrows; and a hazelwood,
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-
nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats updrawn;
And built their castles of dissolving sand
To watch them overflow'd, or following up
And flying the white breaker, daily left
The little footprint daily wash'd away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff;
In this the children play'd at keeping house.
Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,
While Annie still was mistress; but at
times
Enoch would hold possession for a week:
'This is my house and this my little wife.'
'Mine too' said Philip 'turn and turn
about.'
When, if they quarrell'd, Enoch stronger-
made

Was master: then would Philip, his blue
 eyes
 All flooded with the helpless wrath of tears,
 Shriek out 'I hate you, Enoch,' and at this
 the little wife would weep for company,
 And pray them not to quarrel for her sake,
 And say she would be little wife to both.

But when the dawn of rosy childhood
 past,
 And the new warmth of life's ascending
 sun
 Was felt by either, either fixt his heart
 On that one girl; and Enoch spoke his
 love,
 But Philip loved in silence; and the girl
 Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to him;
 But she loved Enoch; tho' she knew it
 not,
 And would if ask'd deny it. Enoch set
 A purpose evermore before his eyes,
 To hoard all savings to the uttermost,
 To purchase his own boat, and make a
 home
 For Annie: and so prosper'd that at last
 A luckier or a bolder fisherman,
 A carefuller in peril, did not breathe
 For leagues along that breaker-beaten
 coast
 Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a
 year
 On board a merchantman, and made him-
 self
 Full sailor; and he thrice had pluck'd a
 life
 From the dread sweep of the down-stream-
 ing seas:
 And all men look'd upon him favourably:
 And ere he touch'd his one-and-twentieth
 May
 He purchased his own boat, and made a
 home
 For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway up
 The narrow street that clamber'd toward
 the mill.

Then, on a golden autumn eventide,
 The younger people making holiday,
 With bag and sack and basket, great and
 small,
 Went nutting to the hazels. Philip stay'd
 (His father lying sick and needing him)
 An hour behind; but as he climb'd the hill,
 Just where the prone edge of the wood
 began
 To feather toward the hollow, saw the pair,
 Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,
 His large grey eyes and weather-beaten
 face
 All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,
 That burn'd as on an altar. Philip look'd,
 And in their eyes and faces read his doom;
 Then, as their faces drew together, groan'd,
 And slipt aside, and like a wounded life

Crept down into the hollows of the wood;
 There, while the rest were loud in merry-
 making,
 Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and
 past
 Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang the
 bells,
 And merrily ran the years, seven happy
 years,
 Seven happy years of health and compe-
 tence,
 And mutual love and honourable toil;
 With children; first a daughter. In him
 woke,
 With his first babe's first cry, the noble
 wish
 To save all earnings to the uttermost,
 And give his child a better bringing-up
 Than his had been, or hers; a wish renew'd,
 When two years after came a boy to be
 The rosy idol of her solitudes,
 While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,
 Or often journeying landward; for in truth
 Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean-
 spoil
 In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,
 Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter
 gales,
 Not only to the market-cross were known,
 But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
 Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,
 And peacock-yewtree of the lonely Hall,
 Whose Friday fare was Enoch's minister-
 ing.

Then came a change, as all things human
 change.
 Ten miles to northward of the narrow port
 Open'd a larger haven: thither used
 Enoch at times to go by land or sea;
 And once when there, and clambering on
 a mast
 In harbour, by mischance he slipt and fell:
 A limb was broken when they lifted him;
 And while he lay recovering there, his
 wife
 Bore him another son, a sickly one:
 Another hand crept too across his trade
 Taking her bread and theirs: and on him
 fell,
 Altho' a grave and staid God-fearing man,
 Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom.
 He seem'd, as in a nightmare of the night,
 To see his children leading evermore
 Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,
 And her, he loved, a beggar: then he
 pray'd
 'Save them from this, whatever comes to
 me.'
 And while he pray'd, the master of that
 ship
 Enoch had served in, hearing his mischance,

Came, for he knew the man and valued him,
 Reporting of his vessel China-bound,
 And wanting yet a boatswain. Would he go?
 There yet were many weeks before she sail'd,
 Sail'd from this port. Would Enoch have the place?
 And Enoch all at once assented to it,
 Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.

So now that shadow of mischance appear'd
 No graver than as when some little cloud
 Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
 And isles a light in the offing: yet the wife—
 When he was gone—the children—what to do?
 Then Enoch lay long-pondering on his plans;
 To sell the boat—and yet he loved her well—
 How many a rough sea had he weather'd in her!
 He knew her, as a horseman knows his horse—
 And yet to sell her—then with what she brought
 Buy goods and stores—set Annie forth in trade
 With all that seamen needed or their wives—
 So might she keep the house while he was gone.
 Should he not trade himself out yonder? go
 This voyage more than once? yea twice or thrice—
 As oft as needed—last, returning rich,
 Become the master of a larger craft,
 With fuller profits lead an easier life,
 Have all his pretty young ones educated,
 And pass his days in peace among his own.

Thus Enoch in his heart determined all:
 Then moving homeward came on Annie pale,
 Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-born.
 Forward she started with a happy cry,
 And laid the feeble infant in his arms;
 Whom Enoch took, and handled all his limbs,
 Appraised his weight and fondled father-like,
 But had no heart to break his purposes
 To Annie, till the morrow, when he spoke.

Then first since Enoch's golden ring had girt
 Her finger, Annie fought against his will:
 Yet not with brawling opposition she,
 But manifold entreaties, many a tear,

Many a sad kiss by day by night renew'd
 (Sure that all evil would come out of it)
 Besought him, supplicating, if he cared
 For her or his dear children, not to go.
 He not for his own self caring but her,
 Her and her children, let her plead in vain;
 So grieving held his will, and bore it thro'.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-friend,
 Bought Annie goods and stores, and set his hand
 To fit their little streetward sitting-room
 With shelf and corner for the goods and stores.
 So all day long till Enoch's last at home,
 Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer and axe,
 Auger and saw, while Annie seem'd to hear
 Her own death-scaffold raising, shrill'd and rang,
 Till this was ended, and his careful hand,—
 The space was narrow,—having order'd all
 Almost as neat and close as Nature packs
 Her blossom or her seedling, paused; and he,
 Who needs would work for Annie to the last,
 Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of farewell
 Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's fears,
 Save, as his Annie's, were a laughter to him.
 Yet Enoch as a brave God-fearing man
 Bow'd himself down, and in that mystery
 Where God-in-man is one with man-in-God,
 Pray'd for a blessing on his wife and babes
 Whatever came to him: and then he said:
 'Annie, this voyage by the grace of God
 Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.
 Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me,
 For I'll be back, my girl, before you know it.'
 Then lightly rocking baby's cradle 'and he,
 This pretty, puny, weakly little one,—
 Nay—for I love him all the better for it—
 God bless him, he shall sit upon my knees
 And I will tell him tales of foreign parts,
 And make him merry, when I come home again.
 Come Annie, come, cheer up before I go.'

Him running on thus hopefully she heard,
 And almost hoped herself; but when he turn'd
 The current of his talk to graver things
 In sailor fashion roughly sermonizing

On providence and trust in Heaven, she
 heard,
 Heard and not heard him; as the village
 girl,
 Who sets her pitcher underneath the spring,
 Musing on him that used to fill it for her,
 Hears and not hears; and lets it overflow.

At length she spoke 'O Enoch, you are
 wise;
 And yet for all your wisdom well know I
 That I shall look upon your face no more.'

'Well then,' said Enoch, 'I shall look on
 yours.
 Annie, the ship I sail in passes here
 (He named the day); get you a seaman's
 glass,
 Spy out my face, and laugh at all your
 fears.'

But when the last of those last moments
 came,
 'Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,
 Look to the babes, and till I come again,
 Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.
 And fear no more for me; or if you fear
 Cast all your cares on God; that anchor
 holds.

Is He not yonder in those uttermost
 Parts of the morning? if I flee to these
 Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,
 The sea is His: He made it.'

Enoch rose,
 Cast his strong arms about his drooping
 wife,
 And kiss'd his wonder-stricken little ones;
 But for the third, the sickly one, who slept
 After a night of feverous wakefulness,
 When Annie would have raised him Enoch
 said
 'Wake him not; let him sleep; how should
 the child
 Remember this?' and kiss'd him in his cot.
 But Annie from her baby's forehead clipt
 A tiny curl, and gave it: this he kept
 Thro' all his future; but now hastily caught
 His bundle, waved his hand, and went his
 way.

She when the day, that Enoch mention'd,
 came,
 Borrow'd a glass, but all in vain: perhaps
 She could not fix the glass to suit her eye;
 Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous;
 She saw him not: and while he stood on
 deck
 Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail
 She watch'd it, and departed weeping for
 him;
 Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his
 grave,

Set her sad will no less to chime with his,
 But throve not in her trade, not being bred
 To barter, nor compensating the want
 By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,
 Nor asking overmuch and taking less,
 And still foreboding 'what would Enoch
 say?'

For more than once, in days of difficulty
 And pressure, had she sold her wares for
 less

Than what she gave in buying what she
 sold:

She fail'd and sadden'd knowing it; and
 thus,

Expectant of that news which never came,
 Gain'd for her own a scanty sustenance,
 And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born and
 grew

Yet sicklier, tho' the mother cared for it
 With all a mother's care: nevertheless,
 Whether her business, often call'd her from
 it,

Or thro' the want of what it needed most.
 Or means to pay the voice who best could
 tell

What most it needed—howsoever it was,
 After a lingering,—ere she was aware,—
 Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,
 The little innocent soul flitted away.

In that same week when Annie buried it,
 Philip's true heart, which hunger'd for her
 peace

(Since Enoch left he had not look'd upon
 her),

Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.
 'Surely' said Philip 'I may see her now,
 May be some little comfort;' therefore
 went,

Past thro' the solitary room in front,
 Paused for a moment at an inner door,
 Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,
 Enter'd; but Annie, seated with her grief,
 Fresh from the burial of her little one,
 Cared not to look on any human face,
 But turn'd her own toward the wall and
 wept.

Then Philip standing up said falteringly
 'Annie, I came to ask a favour of you.'

He spoke; the passion in her moan'd
 reply,

'Favour from one so sad and so forlorn
 As I am!' half abash'd him; yet unask'd,
 His bashfulness and tenderness at war,
 He set himself beside her, saying to her:

'I came to speak to you of what he
 wish'd,

Enoch, your husband: I have ever said
 You chose the best among us—a strong
 man:

For where he fixt his heart he set his hand
To do the thing he will'd, and bore it thro'.
And wherefore did he go this weary way,
And leave you lonely? not to see the
world—

For pleasure?—nay, but for the where-
withal

To give his babes a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or yours: that was his
wish.

And if he come again, vext will he be
To find the precious morning hours were
lost.

And it would vex him even in his grave,
If he could know his babes were running
wild

Like colts about the waste. So, Annie,
now—

Have we not known each other all our
lives?

I do beseech you by the love you bear
Him and his children not to say me nay—
For, if you will, when Enoch comes again
Why then he shall repay me—if you will,
Annie—for I am rich and well-to-do.
Now let me put the boy and girl to school:
This is the favour that I came to ask.

Then Annie with her brows against the
wall

Answer'd 'I cannot look you in the face;
I seem so foolish and so broken down.
When you came in my sorrow broke me
down;

And now I think your kindness breaks me
down;

But Enoch lives; that is borne in on me:
He will repay you: money can be repaid;
Not kindness such as yours.'

And Philip ask'd
'Then you will let me, Annie?'

There she turn'd,
She rose, and fixt her swimming eyes upon
him,

And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,
Then calling down a blessing on his head
Caught at his hand, and wrung it passion-
ately,

And past into the little garth beyond.
So lifted up in spirit he moved away.

Then Philip put the boy and girl to
school,
And bought them needful books, and every-
way,

Like one who does his duty by his own,
Made himself theirs; and tho' for Annie's
sake,

Fearing the lazy gossip of the port,
He oft denied his heart his dearest wish,
And seldom crost her threshold, yet he
sent

Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and
fruit,

The late and early roses from his wall,
Or conies from the down, and now and
then,

With some pretext of fineness in the meal
To save the offence of charitable, flour
From his tall mill that whistled on the
waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's mind:
Scarce could the woman when he came
upon her,

Out of full heart and boundless gratitude
Light on a broken word to thank him with.
But Philip was her children's all-in-all;
From distant corners of the street they ran
To greet his hearty welcome heartily;
Lords of his house and of his mill were
they;

Worried his passive ear with petty wrongs
Or pleasures, hung upon him, play'd with
him

And call'd him Father Philip. Philip gain'd
As Enoch lost; for Enoch seem'd to them
Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
Faint as a figure seen in early dawn
Down at the far end of an avenue,
Going we know not where: and so ten
years,

Since Enoch left his hearth and native
land,
Fled forward, and no news of Enoch came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children
long'd

To go with others, nutting to the wood,
And Annie would go with them; then they
begg'd

For Father Philip (as they call'd him) too:
Him, like the working bee in blossom-
dust,

Blanch'd with his mill, they found; and
saying to him

'Come with us, Father Philip', he denied;
But when the children pluck'd at him to
go,

He laugh'd, and yielded readily to their
wish,

For was not Annie with them? and they
went.

But after scaling half the weary down,
Just where the prone edge of the wood
began

To feather toward the hollow, all her force
Fail'd her; and sighing, 'Let me rest' she
said:

So Philip rested with her well-content;
While all the younger ones with jubilant
cries

Broke from their elders, and tumultuously
Down thro' the whitening hazels made a
plunge

To the bottom, and dispersed, and bent or broke
The lithe reluctant boughs to tear away
Their tawny clusters, crying to each other
And calling, here and there, about the wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot
Her presence, and remember'd one dark hour

Here in this wood, when like a wounded life
He crept into the shadow: at last he said,
Lifting his honest forehead, 'Listen, Annie,
How merry they are down yonder in the wood.

Tired, Annie?' for she did not speak a word.

'Tired?' but her face had fall'n upon her hands;

At which, as with a kind of anger in him,
'The ship was lost' he said, 'the ship was lost!

No more of that! why should you kill yourself

And make them orphans quite?' And Annie said

'I thought not of it: but—I know not why—

Their voices make me feel so solitary.'

Then Philip coming somewhat closer spoke.

'Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,
And it has been upon my mind so long,
That tho' I know not when it first came there,

I know that it will out at last. O Annie,
It is beyond all hope, against all chance,
That he who left you ten long years ago
Should still be living; well then—let me speak:

I grieve to see you poor and wanting help:
I cannot help you as I wish to do
Unless—they say that women are so quick—

Perhaps you know what I would have you know—

I wish you for my wife. I fain would prove

A father to your children: I do think
They love me as a father: I am sure
That I love them as if they were mine own;

And I believe, if you were fast my wife,
That after all these sad uncertain years,
We might be still as happy as God grants
To any of His creatures. Think upon it:
For I am well-to-do—no kin, no care,
No burthen, save my care for you and yours:

And we have known each other all our lives,

And I have loved you longer than you know.'

Then answer'd Annie; tenderly she spoke:

'You have been as God's good angel in our house.

God bless you for it, God reward you for it,

Philip, with something happier than myself.

Can one love twice? can you be ever loved
As Enoch was? what is it that you ask?' 'I am content' he answer'd 'to be loved

A little after Enoch.' 'O' she cried,
Scared as it were, 'dear Philip, wait a while:

If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not come—

Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
Surely I shall be wiser in a year:

O wait a little!' Philip sadly said
'Annie, as I have waited all my life

I well may wait a little.' 'Nay' she cried
'I am bound: you have my promise—in a year:

Will you not bide your year as I bide mine?'

And Philip answer'd 'I will bide my year.'

Here both were mute, till Philip glancing up

Beheld the dead flame of the fallen day
Pass from the Danish barrow overhead;

Then fearing night and chill for Annie, rose

And sent his voice beneath him thro' the wood.

Up came the children laden with their spoil;

Then all descended to the port, and there
At Annie's door he paused and gave his hand,

Saying gently 'Annie, when I spoke to you,
That was your hour of weakness. I was wrong.

I am always bound to you, but you are free.'

Then Annie weeping answer'd 'I am bound.'

She spoke; and in one moment as it were,

While yet she went about her household ways,

Ev'n as she dwelt upon his latest words,
That he had loved her longer than she knew,

That autumn into autumn flash'd again,
And there he stood once more before her face,

Claiming her promise. 'Is it a year?' she ask'd.

'Yes, if the nuts' he said 'be ripe again:
Come out and see.' But she—she put him off—

So much to look to—such a change—a month—

Give her a month—she knew that she was bound—

A month—no more. Then Philip with his eyes

Full of that lifelong hunger, and his voice
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,
'Take your own time, Annie, take your own time.'

And Annie could have wept for pity of him;

And yet she held him on delayingly
With many a scarce-believable excuse,
Trying his truth and his long-sufferance,
Till half-another year had slipped away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,
Abhorrent of a calculation crost,
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.
Some thought that Philip did but trifle with her;

Some that she but held off to draw him on;

And others laugh'd at her and Philip too,
As simple folk that knew not their own minds;

And one, in whom all evil fancies clung
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly
Would hint at worse in either. Her own son

Was silent, tho' he often look'd his wish;
But evermore the daughter prest upon her

To wed the man so dear to all of them
And lift the household out of poverty;
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew
Careworn and wan; and all these things fell on her

Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep, but earnestly
Pray'd for a sign 'my Enoch, is he gone?'
Then compass'd round by the blind wall of night

Brook'd not the expectant terror of her heart,

Started from bed, and struck herself a light,

Then desperately seized the holy Book,
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,
Suddenly put her finger on the text,
'Under a palmtree.' That was nothing to her:

No meaning there: she closed the Book and slept:

When lo! her Enoch sitting on a height,
Under a palmtree, over him the Sun:
'He is gone,' she thought, 'he is happy, he is singing'

Hosanna in the highest: yonder shines
The Sun of Righteousness, and these be palms

Whereof the happy people strowing cried
'Hosanna in the highest!'" Here she woke,

Resolved, sent for him and said wildly to him

'There is no reason why we should not wed.'

'Then for God's sake,' he answer'd, 'both our sakes,
So you will wed me, let it be at once.'

So these were wed and merrily rang the bells,

Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.

A footstep seem'd to fall beside her path.
She knew not whence; a whisper on her ear,

She knew not what; nor loved she to be left

Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
What ail'd her then, that ere she enter'd often

Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,
Fearing to enter: Philip thought he knew:
Such doubts and fears were common to her state,

Being with child: but when her child was born,

Then her new child was as herself renew'd,
Then the new mother came about her heart,
Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,
And that mysterious instinct wholly died.

And where was Enoch? prosperously sail'd

The ship 'Good Fortune,' tho' at setting forth

The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward, shook

And almost overwhelm'd her, yet unwept
She slept across the summer of the world,
Then after a long tumble about the Cape
And frequent interchange of foul and fair,
She passing thro' the summer world again,
The breath of heaven came continually
And sent her sweetly by the golden isles,
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and bought

Quaint monsters for the market of those times,

A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.

Less lucky her home-voyage: at first indeed

Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by day,
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-head
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her bows:

Then follow'd calms, and then winds variable,

Then baffling, a long course of them; and last

Storm, such as drove her under moonless heavens

Till hard upon the cry of 'breakers' came

The crash of ruin, and the loss of all
But Enoch and two others. Half the night,
Buoy'd upon floating tackle and broken
spars,
These drifted, stranding on an isle at morn
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing
roots;

Nor save for pity was it hard to take
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge
They built, and thatch'd with leaves of
palm, a hut,

Half hut, half native cavern. So the three,
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than
boy,

Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and
wreck,

Lay lingering out a three-years' death-in-
life.

They could not leave him. After he was
gone,

The two remaining found a fallen stem;
And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,
Fire-hollowing this in Indian fashion, fell
Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.
In those two deaths he read God's warning
'wait.'

The mountain wooded to the peak, the
lawns

And winding glades high up like ways to
Heaven,

The slender coco's drooping crown of
plumes,

The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses

That coil'd around the stately stems, and
ran

Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world,

All these he saw; but what he fain had
seen

He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard

The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the
reef,

The moving whisper of huge trees that
branch'd

And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,

As down the shore he ranged, or all day
long

Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:

No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts

Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;

The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves
in Heaven,

The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise — but no sail.

There often as he watch'd or seem'd to
watch,

So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
A phantom made of many phantoms moved
Before him haunting him, or he himself
Moved haunting people, things and places,
known

Far in a darker isle beyond the line;

The babes, their babble, Annie, the small
house,

The climbing street, the mill, the leafy
lanes,

The peacock-yewtree and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the
chill

November dawns and dewy-glooming
downs,

The gentle shower, the smell of dying
leaves,

And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his ears,
Tho' faintly, merrily — far and far away —
He heard the pealing of his parish bells;

Then, tho' he knew not wherefore, started
up

Shuddering, and when the beauteous hate-
ful isle

Return'd upon him, had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being everywhere

Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all
alone,

Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head
The sunny and rainy seasons came and
went

Year after year. His hopes to see his own,
And pace the sacred old familiar fields,

Not yet had perish'd, when his lonely doom
Came suddenly to an end. Another ship

(She wanted water) blown by baffling
winds,

Like the Good Fortune, from her destined
course,

Stay'd by this isle, not knowing where she
lay:

For since the mate had seen at early dawn
Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle

The silent water slipping from the hills,
They sent a crew that landing burst away

In search of stream or fount, and fill'd the
shores

With clamour. Downward from his moun-
tain gorge

Stept the long-hair'd long-bearded solitary,
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely
clad,

Muttering and mumbling, idiotlike it seem'd,
 With inarticulate rage, and making signs
 They knew not what: and yet he led the way
 To where the rivulets of sweet water ran;
 And ever as he mingled with the crew,
 And heard them talking, his long-bounden tongue
 Was loosen'd, till he made them understand;
 Whom, when their casks were fill'd they took aboard;
 And there the tale he utter'd brokenly,
 Scarce credited at first but more and more,
 Amazed and melted all who listen'd to it;
 And clothes they gave him and free passage home;
 But oft he work'd among the rest and shook
 His isolation from him. None of these
 Came from his county, or could answer him,
 If question'd, aught of what he cared to know.
 And dull the voyage was with long delays,
 The vessel scarce sea-worthy; but evermore
 His fancy fled before the lazy wind
 Returning, till beneath a clouded moon
 He like a lover down thro' all his blood
 Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-breath
 Of England, blown across her ghostly wall:
 And that same morning officers and men
 Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,
 Pitying the lonely man, and gave him it:
 Then moving up the coast they landed him,
 Ev'n in that harbour whence he sail'd before.
 There Enoch spoke no word to any one,
 But homeward—home—what home? had he a home?
 His home, he walk'd. Bright was that afternoon,
 Sunny but chill; till drawn thro' either chasm,
 Where either haven open'd on the deeps,
 Roll'd a sea-haze and whelm'd the world in grey;
 Cut off the length of highway on before,
 And left but narrow breadth to left and right
 Of wither'd holt or tilth or pasturage.
 On the nigh-naked tree the Robin piped
 Disconsolate, and thro' the dripping haze
 The dead weight of the dead leaf bore it down:
 Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the gloom;
 Last, as it seem'd, a great mist-blotted light
 Flared on him, and he came upon the place.

Then down the long street having slow y stolen,
 His heart foreshadowing all calamity,
 His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd the home
 Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes
 In those far-off seven happy years were born;
 But finding neither light nor murmur there
 (A bill of sale gleam'd thro' the drizzle) crept
 Still downward thinking 'dead or dead to me!'

Down to the pool and narrow wharf he went,
 Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,
 A front of timber-crost antiquity,
 So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old,
 He thought it must have gone; but he was gone
 Who kept it; and his widow, Miriam Lane,
 With daily-dwindling profits held the house;
 A haunt of brawling seamen once, but now
 Still, with yet a bed for wandering men.
 There Enoch rested silent many days.

But Miriam Lane was good and garrulous,
 Nor let him be, but often breaking in,
 Told him, with other annals of the port.
 Not knowing—Enoch was so brown, so bow'd,
 So broken—all the story of his house.
 His baby's death, her growing poverty,
 How Philip put her little ones to school,
 And kept them in it, his long wooing her,
 Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth
 Of Philip's child: and o'er his countenance
 No shadow past, nor motion: any one,
 Regarding, well had deem'd he felt the tale
 Less than the teller: only when she closed,
 'Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost,
 He, shaking his grey head pathetically,
 Repeated muttering 'cast away and lost;'
 Again in deeper inward whispers 'lost!'

But Enoch yearn'd to see her face again;
 'If I might look on her sweet face again
 And know that she is happy.' So the thought
 Haunted and harass'd him, and drove him forth,
 At evening when the dull November day
 Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.
 There he sat down gazing on all below;
 There did a thousand memories roll upon him,
 Unspeakable for sadness. By and by

The ruddy square of comfortable light,
Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's house,
Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures
The bird of passage, till he madly strikes
Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the
street,
The latest house to landward; but behind,
With one small gate that open'd on the
waste,
Flourish'd a little garden square and
wall'd:
And in it throve an ancient evergreen,
A yewtree, and all round it ran a walk
Of shingle, and a walk divided it:
But Enoch shunn'd the middle walk and
stole
Up by the wall, behind the yew; and
thence
That which he better might have shunn'd,
if griefs
Like his have worse or better, Enoch saw.

For cups and silver on the burnish'd
board
Sparkled and shone; so genial was the
hearth:
And on the right hand of the hearth he
saw
Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,
Stout, rosy, with his babe across his knees;
And o'er her second father stoopt a girl,
A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her lifted
hand
Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
To tempt the babe, who rear'd his creasy
arms,
Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they
laugh'd:
And on the left hand of the hearth he
saw
The mother glancing often toward her
babe,
But turning now and then to speak with
him,
Her son, who stood beside her tall and
strong,
And saying that which pleased him, for he
smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life
beheld
His wife his wife no more, and saw the
babe
Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
And all the warmth, the peace, the happi-
ness,
And his own children tall and beautiful,
And him, that other, reigning in his place,
Lord of his rights and of his children's
love,—

Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told him
all,
Because things seen are mightier than
things heard,
Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch,
and fear'd
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of
doom,
Would shatter all the happiness of the
hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a
thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate under-
foot,
And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be
found,
Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and
closed,
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt, but that
his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into the wet earth, and pray'd.

'Too hard to bear! why did they take
me thence?

O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou
That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.
My children too! must I not speak to
these?

They know me not. I should betray my-
self.

Never: no father's kiss for me—the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son.'

There speech and thought and nature
fail'd a little,

And he lay tranced; but when he rose and
paced

Back toward his solitary home again,
All down the long and narrow street he
went

Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
'Not to tell her, never to let her know.'

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Uppore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the
will,

And beating up thro' all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul. 'This miller's wife'
He said to Miriam 'that you told me of,
Has she no fear that her first husband
lives?'

'Aye, aye, poor soul' said Miriam, 'fear
 enow!
 If you could tell her you had seen him
 dead,
 Why, that would be her comfort;' and he
 thought
 'After the Lord has call'd me she shall
 know,
 I wait His time,' and Enoch set himself,
 Scorning an alms, to work whereby to
 live.
 Almost to all things could he turn his
 hand.
 Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought
 To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or
 help'd
 At lading and unlading the tall barks,
 That brought the stinted commerce of
 those days;
 Thus earn'd a scanty living for himself;
 Yet since he did but labour for himself,
 Work without hope, there was not life in it
 Whereby the man could live; and as the
 year
 Roll'd itself round again to meet the day
 When Enoch had return'd, a languor came
 Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually
 Weakening the man, till he could do no
 more,
 But kept the house, his chair, and last his
 bed.
 And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully.
 For sure no gladlier does the stranded
 wreck
 See thro' the grey skirts of a lifting squall
 The boat that bears the hope of life ap-
 proach
 To save the life despair'd of, than he saw
 Death dawning on him, and the close of all.

For thro' that dawning gleam'd a kindlier
 hope
 On Enoch thinking, 'after I am gone,
 Then may she learn I loved her to the last.'
 He call'd aloud for Miriam Lane and said,
 'Woman, I have a secret—only swear,
 Before I tell you—swear upon the book
 Not to reveal it, till you see me dead.'
 'Dead' clamour'd the good woman, 'hear
 him talk!
 I warrant, man, that we shall bring you
 round.'
 'Swear' added Enoch sternly 'on the book.'
 And on the book, half-frighted, Miriam
 swore.
 Then Enoch rolling his grey eyes upon her,
 'Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?'
 'Know him?' she said, 'I knew him far
 away.
 Aye, aye, I mind him coming down the
 street;
 Held his head high, and cared for no man,
 he.'
 Slowly and sadly Enoch answer'd her:

'His head is low, and no man cares for
 him.

I think I have not three days more to live;
 I am the man.' At which the woman gave
 A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.
 'You Arden, you! nay,—sure he was a foot
 Higher than you be.' Enoch said again,
 'My God has bow'd me down to what I
 am;

My grief and solitude have broken me;
 Nevertheless, know you that I am he
 Who married—but that name has twice
 been changed—

I married her who married Philip Ray.
 Sit, listen.' Then he told her of his voyage
 His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back
 His gazing in on Annie, his resolve,
 And how he kept it. As the woman heard
 Fast flow'd the current of her easy tears
 While in her heart she yearn'd incessantly
 To rush abroad all round the little haven,
 Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes;
 But awed and promise-bounden she for-
 bore,

Saying only, 'See your bairns before you
 go!

Oh, let me fetch 'em, Arden,' and arose
 Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung
 A moment on her words, but then replied:

'Woman, disturb me not now at the last,
 But let me hold my purpose till I die.
 Sit down again; mark me and understand,
 While I have power to speak. I charge
 you now,

When you shall see her, tell her that I died
 Blessing her, praying for her, loving her;
 Save for the bar between us, loving her
 As when she laid her head beside my own.
 And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw
 So like her mother, that my latest breath
 Was spent in blessing her and praying for
 her.

And tell my son that I died blessing him.
 And say to Philip that I blest him too;
 He never meant us anything but good.
 But if my children care to see me dead,
 Who hardly knew me living, let them come,
 I am their father; but she must not come.
 For my dead face would vex her after-life.
 And now there is but one of all my blood,
 Who will embrace me in the world-to-be:
 This hair is his: she cut it off and gave it,
 And I have borne it with me all these years,
 And thought to bear it with me to my
 grave;

But now my mind is changed, for I shall
 see him,

My babe in bliss: wherefore when I am
 gone,

Take, give her this, for it may comfort her:
 It will moreover be a token to her,
 That I am he.'

He ceased; and Miriam Lane
Made such a voluble answer promising all,
That once again he roll'd his eyes upon her
Repeating all he wish'd, and once again
She promised.

Then the third night after this,
While Enoch slumber'd motionless and
pale,
And Miriam watch'd and dozed at inter-
vals,
There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms
abroad
Crying with a loud voice 'a sail! a sail!
I am saved'; and so fell back and spoke
no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away.
And when they buried him the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

NORTHERN FARMER

OLD STYLE

[1864]

I

WHEER 'asta beân saw long and meâ liggin'
'ere aloân?
Noorse? thoort nowt o' a noorse: whoy,
Doctor's abeân an' agoân:
Says that I moânt 'a naw moor aäle: but
I beânt a fool:
Git ma my aäle, fur I beânt a-gawin' to
breäk my rule.

II

Doctors, they knows nowt, fur a says
what's nawways true:
Naw soort, o' koind o' use to saây the
things that a do.
I've 'ed my point o' aäle ivry noight sin'
I beân 'ere,
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight
for foorty year.

III

Parson's a beân loikewise, an' a sittin' 'ere
o' my bed.
'The amoghty's a taäkin o' you to 'issén,
my friend,' a said,
An' a tow'd ma my sins, an's toithe were
due, an' I gied it in hond;
I done moy duty by 'um, as I 'a done boy
the lond.

IV

Larn'd a ma' beâ. I reckons I 'annot sa
mooch to larn.
But a cost oop, thot a did, 'boot Bessy
Marris's barne.
Thaw a knaws I hallus voätet wi' Squoire
an' choorch an' staäte,
An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin
the raäte.

V

An' I hallus coom'd to 's choorch afoor
moy Sally wur deäd,
An' 'eard 'um a bummin' awaây loike a buz-
zard-clock¹ ower my 'eäd,
An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I
thowt a 'ad summut to saây,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said
an' I coom'd awaây.

VI

Bessy Marris's barnel tha knaws she laäid
it to meä.
Mowt 'a beân, mayhap, for she wur a bad
un, sheä.
'Siver, I kep 'um, I kep 'um, my lass, tha
mun understand;
I done my duty by 'um as I 'a done boy the
lond.

VII

But Parson a cooms an' a goäs, an' a says
it eäsy an' freeä
'The amoghty's a taäkin' o' you to 'issén,
my friend,' says 'eä.
I weânt saây men be loärs, thaw summun
said it in 'aäste:
But 'e reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a
stubb'd Thurnaby waäste.

VIII

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass? naw, naw,
tha was not born then;
Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eard
'um mysen;
Moäst loike a butter-bump,² fur I 'eärd 'um
about an' about,
But I stubb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raäved
an' rembled 'um out.

IX

Keäper's it wur; fo' they fun 'um theer
a-laäid on 'is faäce
Down i' the woild 'enemies³ afoor I coom'd
to the plaäce.
Noäks or Thimbleby— toäner 'ed shot 'um
as deäd as a naäil.
Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—
but git ma my aäle.

X

Dubbut looäk at the waäste: theer warn't
not feeäd for a cow:
Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looök
at it now—
Warnt worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's
lots a' feeäd,
Fourscoor yows upon it an' some on it
down i' seeäd.

XI

Nobbut a bit on it 's left, an' I meän'd to
'a stubb'd it at fall,
Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow
thruff it an' all,

¹ Cockchafer. ² Bittern. ³ Anemones.

If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let
ma aloän,
Meä, wi' haäte hoonderd haäcre o'
Squire's, an' lond o' my oän.

XII

Do godamoighty knaw what a's doing
a-täakin' o' meä?
I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an'
yonder a peä;
An' Squire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a'
dear a' dear!
And I 'a managed for Squire coom
Michaelmas thutty year.

XIII

A mowt 'a täen owd Joänes, as 'ant not a
'aäpoth o' sense,
Or a mowt 'a täen young Robins—a niver
mended a fence:
But godamoighty a moost tääke meä an'
tääke ma now
Wi aäf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby
hoälm to plow!

XIV

Looök 'ow quoloty smooiles when they seeäs
ma a passin' boy,
Says to thessén naw doubt 'what a man a
beä sewer-loy!
For they knaws what I beän to Squire sin
fust a coom'd to the 'All;
I done moy duty by Squire an' I done my
duty by hall.

XV

Squire's i' Lunnon, an' summun I reckons
'ull 'a to wroite,
For whoä's to howd the lond ater meä thot
muddles ma quoit;
Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give
it to Joänes,
Naw, nor a moänt to Robins—a niver rem-
bles the stoäns.

XVI

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap
wi' 'is kittle o' steäm
Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi'
the Divil's oän teäm.
Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they
says is sweet,
But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I
couldn abeär to see it.

XVII

What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn
bring ma the aäle?
Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a's hallus i'
the owd tääle;
I weänt breäk rules fur Doctor, a knaws
naw moor nor a floy;
Git ma my aäle I tell tha, an' if I mun
doy I mun doy.

NORTHERN FARMER

NEW STYLE

[1869]

I

Dosn't thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they
canters awaäy?
Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what
I 'ears 'em saäy.
Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou's
an ass for thy paäins;
Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs, nor
in all thy braäins.

II

Woä—theer's a craw to pluck wi' tha,
Sam; yon 's parson's 'ouse—
Dosen't thou knaw that a man mun be
eäther a man or a mouse?
Time to think on it then; for thou'll be
twenty to weeäk.¹
Proputty, proputty—woä then, woä—let
ma 'ear mysén speäk.

III

Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän
a-talkin' o' thee;
Thou's beän talkin' to muther, an' she beän
a-tellin' it me.
Thou'll not marry for munny—thou's
sweet upo' parson's lass—
Noä—thou'll marry for luvv—an' we
boäth on us thinks tha an ass.

IV

Seeäd her to-daäy goä by—Säaint's däay
—they was ringing the bells.
She's a beauty, thou thinks—an' soä is
scoors o' gells,
Them as 'as munny an' all—wot's a
beauty?—the flower as blaws.
But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty,
proputty graws.

V

Do'ant be stunt;² tääke time. I knaws
what maäkes tha sa mad.
Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when
I wur a lad?
But I knaw'd a Quaäker feller as often
'as towd ma this:
'Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä
wheer munny is!'

VI

An' I went wheer munny war; an' thy
muther coom to 'and,
Wi' lots o' munny laäid by, an' a nicetish
bit o' land.

¹ This week.² Obstinate.

Maäbye she warn't a beauty—I niver giv
it a thowt—
But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss
as a lass as 'ant nowt?

VII

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt a
nowt when e' s' deäd,
Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and
addle¹ her bread.
Why? fur 'e 's nobbust a curate, an' weänt
niver get hissén c'lear,
An' 'e maäde the bed as 'e ligs on afoor
'e coom'd to the shere.

VIII

An' thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots
o' Varsity debt,
Stook to his taaíl they did, an' 'e 'ant got
shut on 'em yet.
An' e' ligs on 'is back 'i the grip, wi' noän
to lend 'im a shuvv,
Woorse nor, a far-welter'd² yowe; fur,
Sammy, 'e married fur luvv.

IX

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass
an' 'er munny too,
Maakin' 'em goä together as they've good
right to do.
Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er
munny laaíd by?
Naäy—fur I luvv'd 'er a vast sight moor
fur it: reäson why.

X

Ay' an' thy muther says thou wants to
marry the lass,
Cooms of a gentleman burn: an' we boäth
on us thinks tha an ass.
Woä then, propuppy, wiltha?—an ass as
near as mays nowt³—
Woä then, wiltha? dangtha!—the bees is
as fell as owt.⁴

XI

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'eäd,
lad, out o' the fence!
Gentleman burn! what's gentleman burn?
is it shillins an' pence?
Propuppy, propuppy's ivrything 'ere, an',
Sammy, I'm blest
If it is n't the säame oop yonder, fur
them as 'as it 's the best.

XII

Tis 'n them as 'as munny as breäks into
'ouses an' steäls,
Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes
their regular meäls.

¹ Earn.² Or fow-welter'd.—said of a sheep lying on
its back in the furrow.³ Makes nothing.⁴ The flies are as fierce as anything.

Noä, but it 's them as niver knaws wheer
a meäl's to be 'ad.
Taäke my word for it Sammy, the poor
in a loomp is bad.

XIII

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun 'a
beän a laäzy lot,
Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whin-
iver munny was got.
Feyther 'ad ammost nowt; leastways 'is
munny was 'id.
Bue 'e tued an' moi'd issén deäd, an' 'e
died a good un, 'e did.

XIV

Looök thou theer wheer Wigglesby beck
cooms out by the 'ill!
Feyther run oop to the farm, an' I runs
oop to the mill;
An' I'll run oop to the brig, an' that
thou'll live to see;
And if thou marries a good un I'll leäve
the land to thee.

XV

Thim's my noätions, Sammy, wheerby I
means to stick;
But if thou marries a bad un, I'll leave
the land to Dick.—
Coom oop, propuppy, propuppy—that's
what I 'ears 'im säay—
Propuppy, propuppy, propuppy—canter an'
canter awaäy.

WAGES

[1868]

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory
of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on
an endless sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to
right the wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no
lover of glory she;
Give her the glory of going on, and still
to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages
of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the
life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet
seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask
in a summer sky;
Give her the wages of going on, and not
to die.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

[1869]

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the
hills and the plains,—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him
who reigns?

Is not the Vision he, tho' He be not that
which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do
we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of
body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy
division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the
reason why,
For is He not all but thou, that hast
power to feel 'I am I'?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou
fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams and a stifled
splendor and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and
Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer
than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O soul, and
let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is
yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all,
says the fool,
For all we have power to see is a straight
staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the
eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—
were it not He?

FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL

[1869]

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

IDYLLS OF THE KING

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

[1869]

LEODOGRAN, the king of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other
child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle and, ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen
host

Swarm'd over-seas, and harried what was
left.

And so there grew great tracts of wilder-
ness,

Wherein the beast was ever more and
more,

But man was less and less, till Arthur
came.

For first Aurelius lived and fought and
died,

And after him King Uther fought and
died,

But either fail'd to make the kingdom
one.

And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table
Round.

Drew all their petty principedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm and
reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was
waste,

Thick with wet woods, and many a beast
therein,

And none or few to scare or chase the
beast;

So that wild dog and wolf and boar and
bear

Came night and day, and rooted in the
fields,

And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal

The children and devour, but now and
then,

Her own brood lost or dead, lent her
fierce teat

To human sucklings; and the children,
housed

In her foul den, there at their meat would
gowl,

And mock their foster-mother on four
feet,

Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-
like men,

Worse than the wolves. And King Leo-
dogran

Groan'd for the Roman legions here again
And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,

Urien: assail'd him: last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth

with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's

heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till,

amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for

aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly
crown'd,

Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the

King.

Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us
thou!
For here between the man and beast we
die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of
arms,
But heard the call and came: and Guine-
vere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him
pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or
shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than
he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she
saw,

One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and
pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. Then he drave
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and
fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the
knight,
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great lords and barons of his
realm
Flash'd forth and into war; for most of
these,
Colleagueing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying: 'Who is
he
That he should rule us? who hath proven
him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at
him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor
voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King:
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,
felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the
life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere,
And thinking as he rode: 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast
they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of
beasts
Up to my throne and side by side with
me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,

Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be
join'd

To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will nor work my
work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own
realm

Victor and lord. But were I join'd with
her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten
it,
And power on this dead world to make
it live.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the
tale—

When Arthur reach'd a field of battle
bright

With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.
So when the King had set his banner
broad,

At once from either side, with trumpet-
blast,

And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto
blood,

The long-lanced battle let their horses
run.

And now the barons and the kings pre-
vail'd,

And now the King, as here and there that
war

Went swaying; but the Powers who walk
the world

Made lightnings and great thunders over
him,

And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main
might,

And mightier of his hands with every
blow,

And leading all his knighthood threw the
kings

Carados, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
Claudius, and Clariance of Northumber-
land,

The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who
sees

To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved and
brake

Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho! they
yield!'

So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he
loved

And honor'd most. 'Thou dost not doubt
me King.

So well thine arm hath wrought for me
to-day.'

'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of
God

Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the
two,

For each had warder either in the fight,
Swore on the field of death a deathless
love.

And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in
man:

Let chance what will, I trust thee to the
death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he
sent

Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee
well,

Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in
heart

Debating—'How should I that am a king,
However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king.
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and
call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Ar-
thur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and
said:

'Sir King, there be but two old men that
know;

And each is twice as old as I: and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art; and one
Is Merlin's master—so they call him—
Bleys,

Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and
wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-
years

Will learn the secret of our Arthur's
birth.'

'To whom the King Leodogran replied:
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share
of me;

But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the
King said:

'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser
fowl,

And reason in the chase; but wherefore
now

Do these your lords stir up the heat of
war,

Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,
spake—

For bold in heart and act and word was
he,

Whenever slander breathed against the
King—

'Sir, there be many rumors on this head:
For there be those who hate him in their
hearts,

Call him baseborn, and since his ways are
sweet,

And theirs are bestial, hold him less than
man;

And there be those who deem him more
than man,

And dream he dropt from heaven: but my
belief

In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's
time

The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that
held

Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne;
And daughters had she borne him,—one
whereof,

Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved

To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love;

But she, a stainless wife to Gorlois,
So loathed the bright dishonor of his love

That Gorlois and King Uther went to war,
And overthrown was Gorlois and slain.

Then Uther in his wrath and heat be-
sieged

Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,

Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
And there was none to call to but him-
self.

So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,

And with a shameful swiftness; afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died him-
self,

Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to
wrack.

And that same night, the night of the new
year,

By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vexed his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the
lords

Of that fierce day were as the lords of
this,

Wild beasts, and surely would have torn
the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known;
for each

But sought to rule for his own self and
hand,

And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the
child,

And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife

Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him
with her own;

And no man knew. And ever since the
lords

Have foughten like wild beasts among
themselves,

So that the realm has gone to wrack; but
now,

This year, when Merlin—for his hour
had come—

Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the
hall,

Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your
king,"

A hundred voices cried: "Away with him!
No king of ours! a son of Gorlois he;

Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his
craft,

And while the people clamor'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great
lords

Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with him-
self

If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorlois after death,
Or Uther's son and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Came-
liard,

With Gawain and young Modred, her two
sons,

Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
cent;

Whom as he could, not as he would, the
King

Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat:
'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his
men

Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this
king—

So many those that hate him, and so strong,
So few his knights, however brave they
be—

Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee:
few,

Few, but all brave, all of one mind with
him;

For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat

Crowned on the dais, and his warriors
cried,

"Be thou the king, and we will work thy
will

Who love thee." Then the King in low
deep tones,

And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own
self

That when they rose, knighted from kneel-
ing, some

Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one
who wakes

Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake, and cheer'd his
Table Round

With large, divine, and comfortable words,
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld

From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King;

And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,

Down from the casement over Arthur,
smote

Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens

Who stood in silence near his throne, the
friends

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose
vast wit

And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the
Lake,

Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.

She gave the King his huge cross-hilted
sword,

Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face

Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;

But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep—calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world—and when the sur-
face rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our
Lord.

"There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the
sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so
bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this
world,
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye
shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak your-
self,
"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's
face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
"Take thou and strike! the time to cast
away
Is yet far-off." So this great brand the
king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen
down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister;' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I;
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd the
King.

She answer'd, 'These be secret things,' and
sign'd

To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw;
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard—the same that af-
terward

Struck for the throne, and striking found
his doom.

And then the Queen made answer:
'What know I?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorlois; yea, and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness; but this king is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,

A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the
world."

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a
cry?

But when did Arthur chance upon thee
first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee
true:

He found me first when yet a little maid;
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of
heath,

And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead;
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can
walk

Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my
heart,

And dried my tears, being a child with me,
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was
I,

Stern too at times, and then I loved him
not,

But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for
me,

For then I surely thought he would be king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the
mage;

And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to
breathe,

Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape
thereof

A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to
stern

Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the
two

Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great
 sea fall,
 Wave after wave, each mightier than the
 last,
 Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the
 deep
 And full of voices, slowly rose and plung'd
 Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
 And down the wave and in the flame was
 borne
 A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
 Who stoopt and caught the babe and cried,
 "The King!
 Here is an heir for Uther!" And the
 fringe
 Of that great breaker, sweeping up the
 strand,
 Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
 And all at once all round him rose in fire,
 So that the child and he were clothed in
 fire.
 And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
 Free sky and stars: "And this same child,"
 he said,
 "Is he who reigns; nor could I part in
 peace
 Till this were told." And saying this the
 seer
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of
 death,
 Not ever to be question'd any more
 Save on the further side; but when I met
 Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were
 truth—
 The shining dragon and the naked child
 Descending in the glory of the seas—
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
 In riddling triplets of old time, and said:—
 "Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the
 sky!
 A young man will be wiser by and by;
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die.
 Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
 And truth or clothed or naked let it be.
 Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom
 blows:
 Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who
 knows?
 From the great deep to the great deep he
 goes."
 'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou
 Fear not to give this King thine only child,
 Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
 Hereafter; and dark sayings from of o'd
 Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of
 men,
 And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
 For comfort after their wage-work is done,
 Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time
 Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn

Tho' men may wound him that he will not
 die,
 But pass, again to come, and then or now
 Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
 Till these and all men hail him for their
 king.'

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
 But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'
 Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept,
 and saw,
 Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
 Field after field, up to a height, the peak
 Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
 Now looming, and now lost; and on the
 slope
 The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was
 driven,
 Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof
 and rick,
 In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
 Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the
 haze
 And made it thicker; while the phantom
 king
 Sent out at times a voice; and here or
 there
 Stood one who pointed toward the voice,
 the rest
 Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of
 ours,
 No son of Uther, and no king of ours';
 Till with a wink his dream was changed,
 the haze
 Descended, and the solid earth became
 As nothing, but the King stood out in
 heaven,
 Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
 Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
 Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom
 he loved
 And honor'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride
 forth
 And bring the Queen, and watch'd him
 from the gates;
 And Lancelot past away among the
 flowers—
 For then was latter April—and return'd
 Among the flowers, in May, with Guine-
 vere.
 To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
 Chief of the church in Britain, and before
 The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the
 King
 That morn was married, while in stainless
 white,
 The fair beginners of a nobler time,
 And glorying in their vows and him, his
 knights
 Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
 Far shone the fields of May thro' open
 door,

The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their
Queen,

Roll'd incense, and there past along the
hymns

A voice as of the waters, while the two
Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless
love:

And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is
mine.

Let chance what will, I love thee to the
death!'

To whom the Queen replied with drooping
eyes,

'King and my lord, I love thee to the
death!'

And holy Dubric spread his hands and
spake:

'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the
world

Other, and may thy Queen be one with
thee,

And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

So Dubric said; but when they left the
shrine

Great lords from Rome before the portal
stood,

In scornful stillness gazing as they past:
Then while they paced a city all on fire

With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets
blew,

And Arthur's knighthood sang before the
King:—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white
with May!

Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd
away!

Blow thro' the living world—"Let the
King reign!"

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's
realm?

Flash brand and lance, fall battle-axe upon
helm,

Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the
King reign!

'Strike for the King and live! his knights
have heard

That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the
King reign!

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the
dust.

Blow trumpet! live the strength, and die
the lust!

Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let
the King reign!

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou
diest,

The King is king, and ever wills the high-
est.

Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let
the King reign!

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his
May!

Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let
the King reign!

'The King will follow Christ, and we
the King,

In whom high God hath breathed a secret
thing.

Fall battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the
King reign!

So sang the knighthood, moving to their
hall.

There at the banquet those great lords from
Rome,

The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in and claim'd their tribute as of
yore.

But Arthur spake: 'Behold, for these have
sworn

To wage my wars, and worship me their
King;

The old order changeth, yielding place to
new;

And we that fight for our fair father
Christ,

Seeing that ye be grown too weak and
old

To drive the heathen from your Roman
wall,

No tribute will we pay.' So those great
lords

Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove
with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a
space

Were all one will, and thro' that strength
the King

Drew in the petty principdoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles over-
came

The heathen hordes, and made a realm and
reign'd.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

[1859]

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,

High in her chamber up a tower to the
east

Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where morning's
earliest ray

Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it

A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father,
climb'd

That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,

Strip'd off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,

Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;

That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;

That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:

And ah, God's mercy, what a stroke was there!

And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God

Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,

And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield

Of Lancelot, she that knew not even his name?

He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,

Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name

Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd him king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.

A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side:

For here two brothers, one a king, had met

And fought together; but their names were lost;

And each had slain his brother at a blow;
And down they fell and made the glen abhorr'd:

And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,

And lichen'd into color with the crags:

And he that once was king had on a crown

Of diamonds, one in front and four aside.
And Arthur came, and laboring up the

pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull

Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown

Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,

And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt be king.'

Thereafter, when a king, he had the gems

Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights

Saying: 'These jewels, whereupon I chanced

Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—

For public use: henceforward let there be,

Once every year, a joust for one of these:
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn

Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow

In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land

Hereafter, which God hinder!' Thus he spoke:

And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still

Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,

With purpose to present them to the Queen
When all were won; but, meaning all at once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last

And largest, Arthur, holding then his court

Hard on the river nigh the place which now

Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake — for she had been sick — to Guinevere:

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said
'ye know it,'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the great
 deeds
 Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
 A sight ye love to look on.' And the
 Queen
 Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
 On Lancelot, where he stood beside the
 King.
 He, thinking that he read her meaning
 there,
 'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
 Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a
 heart
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen—
 However much he yearn'd to make com-
 plete
 The tale of diamonds for his destined
 boon—
 Urged him to speak against the truth, and
 say,
 'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly
 whole,
 And lets me from the saddle;' and the
 King
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went
 his way.
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began:
 'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to
 blame!
 Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the
 knights
 Are half of them our enemies, and the
 crowd
 Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who
 take
 Their pastime now the trustful King is
 gone!"'
 Then Lancelot, vexed at having lied in vain:
 'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so
 wise,
 My Queen, that summer when ye loved me
 first.
 Then of the crowd ye took no more
 account
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
 When its own voice clings to each blade of
 grass,
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
 Them surely can I silence with all ease.
 But now my loyal worship is allow'd
 Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
 Has link'd our names together in his lay,
 Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
 The pearl of beauty; and our knights at
 feast
 Have pledged us in this union, while the
 King
 Would listen smiling. How then? is there
 more?
 Has Arthur spoken aught? or would your-
 self,
 Now weary of my service and devoir,
 Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
 'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless
 King,
 That passionate perfection, my good lord—
 But who can gaze upon the sun in heaven?
 He never spake word of reproach to me,
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
 He cares not for me: only here to-day
 There gleamed a vague suspicion in his
 eyes:
 Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with
 him—else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
 And swearing men to vows impossible,
 To make them like himself; but, friend, to
 me
 He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
 For who loves me must have a touch of
 earth;
 The low sun makes the color: I am yours,
 Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the
 bond.
 And therefore hear my words: go to the
 jousts:
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our
 dream
 When sweetest; and the vermin voices here
 May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but
 they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
 knights:
 'And with what face, after my pretext
 made,
 Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
 Before a king who honors his own word
 As if it were his God's?'

'Yea,' said the Queen,
 'A moral child without the craft to rule,
 Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,
 If I must find you wit: we hear it said
 That men go down before your spear at a
 touch,
 But knowing you are Lancelot; your great
 name,
 This conquers: hide it therefore; go un-
 known:
 Win! by this kiss you will: and our true
 King
 Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
 As all for glory; for to speak him true,
 Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he
 seem,
 No keener hunter after glory breathes.
 He loves it in his knights more than him-
 self;
 They prove to him his work: win and
 return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
 Wroth at himself. Not willing to be
 known,
 He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
 And there among the solitary downs,
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
 That all in loops and links among the dales
 Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
 Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
 And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
 And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
 Moving to meet him in the castle court;
 And close behind them stept the lily maid Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
 There was naught. Some light jest among them rose
 With laughter dying down as the great knight
 Approach'd them; then the Lord of Astolat:
 'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
 Livest between the lips? for by thy state
 And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
 After the King, who eat in Arthur's ha'ls.
 Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
 'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
 What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
 But since I go to joust as one unknown
 At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not;
 Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—
 I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
 Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat: 'Here is Torre's:
 Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre;
 And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
 His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,
 'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'

Here laugh'd the father saying: 'Fie, Sir Churl,
 Is that an answer for a noble knight?
 Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
 He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
 Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
 And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
 To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay, good father, shame me not
 Before this noble knight,' said young Lavaine,
 'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:
 He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:
 A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt
 That some one put this diamond in her hand,
 And that it was too slippery to be held,
 And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
 The castle-well, belike; and then I said
 That if I went and if I fought and won it—
 But all was jest and joke among ourselves—
 Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
 But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
 To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
 Win shall I not, but do my best to win;
 Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd Lancelot,
 Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship
 O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
 Then were I glad of you as guide and friend:
 And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear,
 It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
 And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.'
 'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir Torre,
 'Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.'
 Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
 Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
 Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement
 Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
 Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd:
 'If what is fair be but for what is fair,
 And only queens are to be counted so,
 Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
 Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
 Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,
 Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
 Lifted her eyes and read his lineaments.

The great and guilty love he bare the
Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere
his time.

Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the
world,

Had been the sleeker for it; but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who 'was yet a living soul.

Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest
man

That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marr'd, of more than twice her
years,

Seam'd with an ancient sword-cut on the
cheek,

And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up
her eyes

And loved him, with that love which was
her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the
court,

Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half
disdain

Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind:
Whom they with meats and vintage of their
best

And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table
Round,

And ever well and readily answer'd he;
But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guin-
evere,

Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the baron that, ten years
before,

The heathen caught and reft him of his
tongue.

'He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce
design

Against my house, and him they caught
and maim'd;

But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among
the woods

By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur
broke

The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine
said, rapt

By all the sweet and sudden passion of
youth

Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have
fought.

O, tell us — for we live apart — you know

Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot
spoke

And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent
Glem;

And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Douglas; that on Bassa; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy
skirts

Of Celidon the forest; and again
By Castle Gurnion, where the glorious
King

Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald centred in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he
breathed;

And at Carleon had he helped his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild
White Horse

Set every gilded parapet shuddering;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath
Treroit,

Where many a heathen fell; 'and on the
mount

Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them; and I saw him, after,
stand

High on a heap of slain, from spur to
plume

Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
'They are broken, they are broken!' for
the King,

However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the
jousts, —

For if his own knight casts him down, he
laughs,

Saying his knights are better men than he —
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him: I never saw his like; there lives
No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,

Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
'Save your great self, fair lord;' and when
he fell

From talk of war to traits of pleasantry —
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind —
She still took note that when the living
smile

Died from his lips, across him came a
cloud

Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him
cheer,

There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature: and she
thought

That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
 And all night long his face before her lived,
 As when a painter, poring on a face,
 Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
 Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
 The shape and color of a mind and life,
 Lives for his children, ever at its best
 And fullest; so the face before her lived,
 Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
 Of noble things, and held her from her sleep,
 Till rather she rose, half-cheated in the thought
 She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
 First as in fear, step after step, she stole
 Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
 Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
 'This shield, my friend, where is it?' and Lavaine
 Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
 There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,
 and smooth'd
 The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
 Half-enslaved of the flattering hand, she drew
 Nearer and stood. He look'd, and, more amazed
 Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
 The maiden standing in the dewy light.
 He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
 Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
 For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
 Rapt on his face as if it were a god's.
 Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire
 That he should wear her favor at the tilt.
 She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
 'Fair lord, whose name I know not—
 noble it is,
 I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
 My favor at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he,
 'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
 Favor of any lady in the lists.
 Such is my wont, as those who know me know.'
 'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing mine
 Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
 That those who know should know you.'
 And he turn'd
 Her counsel up and down within his mind,
 And found it true, and answer'd: 'True,
 my child.
 Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
 What is it?' and she told him, 'A red
 sleeve

Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it: then
 he bound
 Her token on his helmet, with a smile
 Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
 For any maiden living,' and the blood
 Sprang to her face and fill'd her with
 delight;
 But left her all the paler when Lavaine
 Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd
 shield,
 His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
 Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
 'Do me this grace, my child, to have my
 shield
 In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'
 She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your
 squire!'
 Whereat Lavaine said laughing: 'Lily maid,
 For fear our people call you lily maid
 In earnest, let me bring your color back;
 Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence
 to bed.'
 So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own
 hand,
 And thus they moved away: she staid a
 minute,
 Then made a sudden step to the gate, and
 there—
 Her bright hair blown about the serious
 face
 Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused by the gateway, standing near the
 shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms
 far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took
 the shield,
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.
 Meanwhile the new companions past
 away
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless
 downs,
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived
 a knight
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty
 years
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labor'd and
 pray'd,
 And ever laboring had scoop'd himself
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall
 On massive columns, like a shore-cliff cave,
 And cells and chambers: all were fair and
 dry;
 The green light from the meadows under-
 neath
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
 And in the meadows tremulous aspen-
 trees
 And poplars made a noise of falling show-
 ers.
 And thither wending there that night they
 bode.

But when the next day broke from under-
ground,
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the
cave,
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and
rode away.
Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold
my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the
Lake,
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their
own praise,
But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it in-
deed?'
And after muttering, 'The great Lancelot,'
At last he got his breath and answer'd:
'One,
One have I seen—that other, our liege
lord,
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of
kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there—then were I stricken
blind
That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd
the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run thro' the peopled gallery which half
round
Lay like a rainbow fallen upon the grass.
Until they found the clear-faced King, who
sat
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon
clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in
gold,
And from the carven-work behind him
crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of
them
Thro' knots and loops and folds innum-
erable
Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they
found
The new design wherein they lost them-
selves,
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless
king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine
and said:
'Me you call great: mine is the firmer
seat,
The truer lance: but there is many a
youth
Now crescent, who will come to all I am
And overcome it; and in me there dwells

No greatness, save it be some far-off
touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great:
There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped
upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either
side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the
lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly
move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock that a man far-off might well per-
ceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder
of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into
it
Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he over-
threw.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and
kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the
lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger
knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other,
'Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force
alone—
The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lancelot
worn
Favor of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we that know him
know.'
'How then? who then?' a fury seized them
all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their
steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driven backward by the wind
they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North
Sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit,
bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the
skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark
And him that helms it; so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a
spear

Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the
head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snap and
remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worship-
fully:
He bore a knight of old repute to the
earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where
he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet
endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle
To those he fought with,—drave his kith
and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the
lists,
Back to the barrier; then the trumpets
blew
Proclaiming his the prize who wore the
sleeve
Of scarlet and the pearls; and all the
knights,
His party, cried, 'Advance and take thy
prize
The diamond;' but he answer'd: 'Diamond
me
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me
not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from
the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and
sat,
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-
head.'
'Ah, my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said La-
vaine,
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'
But he, 'I die already with it: draw—
Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lance-
lot gave
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly
groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down
he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd
away.
Then came the hermit out and bare him
in,
There stanch'd his wound; and there, in
daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wild world's rumor by the
grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling
showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay

But on that day when Lancelot fled the
lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and
West,
Lords of waste marshes, kings of desolate
isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying
to him,
'Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won
the day,
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his
prize
Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such
an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
He seem'd to me another Lancelot—
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lance-
lot—
He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore
rise,
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the
knight.
Wounded and wearied, needs must he be
near.
I charge you that you get at once to
horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not
one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:
His prowess was too wondrous. We will
do him
No customary honor: since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after. Rise and
take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is, and how he
fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye
find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he
took
And gave the diamond: then from where
he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a
prince
In the mid might and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed the Courteous, fair and
strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint,
And Gareth, a good knight, but there-
withal
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of
Lot,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the King's command to sally
forth

In quest of whom he knew not, made him
leave
The banquet and concourse of knights and
kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Past, thinking, 'Is it Lancelot who hath
come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for
gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And ridden away to die?' So fear'd the
King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, re-
turn'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing
ask'd,
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay, lord,'
she said.
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the Queen
amazed,
'Was he not with you? won he not your
prize?'
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why, that like
was he.'
And when the King demanded how she
knew,
Said: 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted
from us
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
That men went down before his spear at
a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great
name
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide
his name
From all men, even the King, and to this
end
Had made the pretext of a hindering
wound,
That he might joust unknown of all, and
learn
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he
learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory."'

Then replied the King:
'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True,
indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter: now
remains
But little cause for laughter: his own kin—
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him,
this!—

His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon
him;
So that he went sore wounded from the
field.
Yet good news too; for goodly hopes are
mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great
pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, Lord,' she said,
'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that, she
choked,
And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
Past to her chamber, and there flung her-
self
Down on the great King's couch, and
writhed upon it,
And clench'd her fingers till they bit the
palm,
And shriek'd out 'Traitor!' to the unhear-
ing wall,
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose
again,
And moved about her palace, proud and
pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region
round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the
quest,
Touch'd at all points except the poplar
grove,
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat;
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the
maid
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from
Camelot, lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve?'
'He won.'
'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the
jousts
Hurt in the side;' whereat she caught her
breath;
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp
lance go;
Thereon she smote her hand; wellnigh
she swoon'd:
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her,
came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the
prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not
find
The victor, but had ridden a random round
To seek him, and had wearied of the
search.
To whom the Lord of Astolat: 'Bide with
us.
And ride no more at random, noble prince!

Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;
 This will he send or come for: furthermore
 Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
 Needs must we hear.' To this the courteous prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
 And staid; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine;
 Where could be found face daintier? then
 her shape
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—
 again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:
 'Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for
 me!
 And oft they met among the garden yews,
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a
 height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and low smiles, and golden elo-
 quence
 And amorous adulation, till the maid
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him: 'Prince,
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name? Why
 slight your King,
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and
 prove
 No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
 To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine head,'
 said he,
 'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;
 But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
 And when the shield was brought, and
 Gawain saw
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with
 gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and
 mock'd:
 'Right was the King! our Lancelot! that
 true man!
 'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, 'I,
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight
 of all.'
 'And if I dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that you
 love
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye
 know it!
 Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in
 vain?'
 Full simple was her answer: 'What know
 I?
 My brethren have been all my fellowship;
 And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they
 talk'd,
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so
 myself—

I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love.'
 'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him
 well,
 But would not, knew ye what all others
 know,
 And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried
 Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away:
 But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little!
 One golden minute's grace! he wore your
 sleeve:
 Would he break faith with one I may not
 name?
 Must our true man change like a leaf at
 last?
 Nay—like enow: why then, far be it from
 me
 To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
 And, damsel, for I deem you know full
 well
 Where your great knight is hidden, let me
 leave
 My quest with you; the diamond also:
 here!
 For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
 And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
 From your own hand; and whether he love
 or not,
 A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
 A thousand times!—a thousand times
 farewell!
 Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
 May meet at court hereafter: there, I
 think,
 So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,
 We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,
 And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he
 gave,
 The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
 Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he
 went
 A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told
 the King
 What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the
 knight.'
 And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I
 learnt;
 But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round
 The region: but I lighted on the maid
 Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and
 to her,
 Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
 I gave the diamond: she will render it;
 For by mine head she knows his hiding-
 place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and
 replied,
 'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more

On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in
awe,

For twenty strokes of the blood, without a
word,

Linger'd that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd
abroad

About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues
were loosed:

'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'

Some read the King's face, some the
Queen's, and all

Had marvel what the maid might be, but
most

Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the
sharp news.

She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd
so low,

Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquil-
lity.

So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder
flared:

Till even the knights at banquet twice or
thrice

Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen,
who sat

With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet un-
seen

Crush'd the wild passion out against the
floor

Beneath the banquet, where the meats be-
came

As wormwood and she hated all who
pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and
said:

'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and
now,

Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'
'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me
hence,'

She answer'd, 'and find out our dear La-
vaine.'

'Ye will not lose your wits for dear La-
vaine:

Bide,' answer'd he: 'we needs must hear
anon

Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she said,
'And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, whereso'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond
to him,

Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud prince who left the quest
to me.

Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for the lack of gentle maiden's
aid.

The gentler-born the maiden, the more
bound,

My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know,
When these have worn their tokens: let me
hence,

I pray you.' Then her father nodding
said:

'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,
Right fain were I to learn this knight
were whole,

Being our greatest: yea, and you must
give it—

And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's—
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
And while she made her ready for her
ride

Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'

And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die.'

But she was happy enough and shook it off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'
Then far away with good Sir Torre for
guide

Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless
downs

To Camelot, and before the city-gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers;
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried,
'Lavaine,

How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He
amazed,

'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lance-
lot!

How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?'
But when the maid had told him all her
tale,

Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his
moods

Left them, and under the strange-stated
gate,

Where Arthur's wars were render'd mys-
tically,

Past up the still rich city to his kin,
 His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
 And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
 Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque
 Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
 Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
 Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,
 Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
 But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
 And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
 His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
 Lay naked on the wolf-skin, and a dream
 Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
 Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
 The sound not wonted in a place so still
 Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
 'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King.'
 His eyes glisten'd: she fancied, 'Is it for me?'
 And when the maid had told him all the tale
 Of king and prince, the diamond sent, the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
 Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand.
 Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
 That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
 At once she slipt like water to the floor.
 'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.
 Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,' she said;
 'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'
 What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her,
 Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
 In the heart's colors on her simple face;
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplex in mind,
 And being weak in body said no more,
 But did not love the color; woman's love,
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
 Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
 There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
 Thence to the cave. So day by day she past
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
 Gliding, and every day she tended him,
 And likewise many a night; and Lancelot
 Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
 Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
 Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid
 Sweetly forebore him ever, being to him
 Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
 Milder than any mother to a sick child,
 And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
 Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
 Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
 The simples and the science of that time,
 Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
 Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
 Would listen for her coming and regret
 Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
 And loved her with all love except the love
 Of man and woman when they love their best,
 Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
 In any knightly fashion for her sake.
 And peradventure had he seen her first
 She might have made this and that other world
 Another world for the sick man; but now
 The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,
 His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
 And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.
 Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
 Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
 These, as but born of sickness, could not live;
 For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
 Full often the bright image of one face,
 Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
 Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
 Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace
 Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,

Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
 What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
 She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
 And drave her ere her time across the fields
 Far into the rich city, where alone
 She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain: it cannot be.
 He will not love me: how then? must I die?'
 Then, as a little helpless innocent bird,
 That has but one plain passage of few notes,
 Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
 For all an April morning, till the ear
 Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
 Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'
 And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,
 And found no ease in turning or in rest;
 And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd, 'death or him,'
 Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
 To Astolat returning rode the three.
 There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
 In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
 She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought,
 'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
 If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'
 And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
 That she should ask some goodly gift of him
 For her own self or hers: 'and do not shun
 To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
 Such service have ye done me that I make
 My will of yours, and prince and lord am I
 In mine own land, and what I will I can.'
 Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
 But like a ghost without the power to speak.
 And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
 And bode among them yet a little space
 Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
 He found her in among the garden yews,
 And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,
 Seeing I go to-day:' then out she brake:
 'Going? and we shall never see you more.

And I must die for want of one bold word.'
 'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'
 Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
 'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.'
 'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'
 And innocently extending her white arms,
 'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.'
 And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,
 I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine;
 But now there never will be wife of mine.'
 'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
 But to be with you still, to see your face,
 To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'
 And Lancelot answer'd: 'Nay, the world, the world,
 All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
 To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
 To blare its own interpretation—nay,
 Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
 And your good father's kindness.' And she said,
 'Not to be with you, not to see your face—
 Alas for me then, my good days are done!' 'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay!
 This is not love, but love's first flash in youth,
 Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self;
 And you yourself will smile at your own self
 Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
 To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age.
 And then will I, for true you are and sweet
 Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
 More specially should your good knight be poor,
 Endow you with broad land and territory
 Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
 So that would make you happy: furthermore,
 Even to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,
 In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
 This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
 And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
 She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied,

'Of all this will I nothing;' and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her
tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black
walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father: 'Ay, a
flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom
dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,
'That were against me: what I can I will;'
And there that day remain'd, and toward
even
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the
maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked
shield;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the
stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and
look'd
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve
had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking
sound:
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking
at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his
hand,
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture
form'd
And grew between her and the pictured
wall.

Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace to
thee,
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all
calm.

But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant
field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the
owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she
mixt

Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love
and Death.'

And sang it: sweetly could she make and
sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in
vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to
pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death
must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to
me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade
away;
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless
clay:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could
be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for
me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.'

'High with the last line scaled her voice,
and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,
and thought
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of
the house
That ever shrieks before a death,' and
call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and
fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light
of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let me
die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we
know,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and
thought,

'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
Speaking a still good-morrow with her
eyes.

At last she said: 'Sweet brothers, yester-
night

I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the
woods,

And when ye used to take me with the
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.

And yet I cried because ye would not
pass

Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.

And yet ye would not; but this night I dream'd
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my will:"

And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.

So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.

There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me;

But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,

And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;

Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me,

Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me one:

And there the King will know me and my love,

And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest!"

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child, ye seem

Light-headed, for what force is yours to go

So far, being sick? and wherefore would ye look

On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,

And bluster into stormy sobs and sav:

'I never loved him: an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,

Then will I strike at him and strike him down;

Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,

For this discomfort he hath done the house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply:

'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,

Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me than it is mine to love

Him of all men who seems to me the highest.'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing 'highest?'—

He meant to break the passion in her—'nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;

But this I know, for all the people know it,

He loves the Queen, and in an open shame;
And she returns his love in open shame;
If this be high, what is it to be low?"

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:

'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger: these are slanders; never yet

Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.

But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,

My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best

And greatest, tho' my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,

Thanks, but you work against your own desire;

For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner: wherefore cease,

Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,

She, with a face bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised

A letter, word for word; and when he ask'd,

'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
Then will I bear it gladly,' she replied,

'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,

But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote

The letter she devised; which being writ
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and true,

Deny me not,' she said—'ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,

My latest: lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand

Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat has gone from out my heart,

Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.

And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge

Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.

There surely I shall speak for mine own self,

And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone

Go with me; he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased: her father promised; where-
upon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her
death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the
eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from un-
derground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent
brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that
shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the
barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot
took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to
her,
'Sister, farewell forever,' and again,
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the
dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the
flood —
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter — all her bright hair streaming
down —
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in
white
All but her face, and that clear-featured
face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace
craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and
blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds; for
he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the
Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that
he,

Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her
feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the
walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the
stream,

They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd:
'Queen,

Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making
them

An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are
words;

Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O, grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin
in words

Perchance, we both can pardon; but, my
Queen,

I hear of rumors flying thro' your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and
wife,

Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect: let rumors be:
When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away,
the Queen

Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was
green;

Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive
hand

Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied:

'It may be I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and
wrong

To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice
their worth

Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
For her! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys
apart.

I doubt not that, however changed, you keep
 So much of what is graceful: and myself
 Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy
 In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule;
 So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!
 A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
 So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;
 Deck her with these; tell her, she shines me down:
 An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
 Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
 O, as much fairer—as a faith once fair
 Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—
 Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
 Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
 She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,
 And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
 Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the stream.
 Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
 Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
 Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain
 At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
 Close underneath his eyes, and right across
 Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
 Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
 Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
 To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
 On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
 There two stood arm'd, and kept the door;
 to whom,
 All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
 Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd,
 'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard face,
 As hard and still as is the face that men
 Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
 On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said:
 'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
 Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!
 Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
 Or come to take the King to Fairyland?

For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
 But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
 Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless man
 From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
 And pointed to the damsel and the doors.
 So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale
 And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
 And reverently they bore her into hall.
 Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
 And Lancelot later came and mused at her;
 And last the Queen herself, and pitied her;
 But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
 Stoop'd, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
 I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
 Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
 I loved you, and my love had no return,
 And therefore my true love has been my death.
 And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
 And to all other ladies, I make moan:
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
 As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read;
 And ever in the reading lords and dames
 Wept, looking often from his face who read
 To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
 So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips
 Who had devised the letter moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:
 'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
 Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
 Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
 But loved me with a love beyond all love
 In women, whomsoever I have known.
 Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
 Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
 I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
 No cause, not willingly, for such a love.
 To this I call my friends in testimony,
 Her brethren, and her father, who himself
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
 To break her passion, some discourtesy
 Against my nature: what I could, I did.
 I left her and I bade her no farewell;

Tho' had I dreamt the damsel would have
died,
I might have put my wits to some rough
use,
And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen—
Sea was her wrath, yet working after
storm:
'Ye might at least have done her so much
grace,
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from
her death.'
He raised his head, their eyes met and
hers fell,
He adding:

'Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me thro' the world,
she ask'd;
It could not be. I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would darken
down,
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her—then
would I,
More specially were he she wedded poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow
seas,
To keep them in all joyance: more than
this
I could not; this she would not, and she
died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd: 'O my
knight,
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all
the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely
head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them: 'Let her
tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!' which was
wrought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and
dames
And people, from the high door streaming,
brake

Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved
apart,

Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, 'Lancelot.
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.'
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen,
forgiven.'

But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approach'd him, and with full affection
said:

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I
have
Most joy and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my
side,

And many a time have watch'd thee at
the tilt

Strike down the lusty and long practised
knight

And let the younger and unskill'd go by
To win his honor and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved; but now I would to
God,

Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maiden,
shaped, it seems,

By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely
man

Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the
Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot: 'Fair she was,
my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to
be.

To doubt her fairness were to want an
eye,

To doubt her pureness were to want a
heart—

Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be
bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said
the King.

'Let love be free; free love is for the
best:

And, after heaven, on our dull side of
death,

What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he
went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook

Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
 The high reed wave, and lifted up his
 eyes
 And saw the barge that brought her moving
 down,
 Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
 Low in himself: 'Ah, simple heart and
 sweet,
 Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
 Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for
 thy soul?
 Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at
 last—
 Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"
 Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous
 pride?
 Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
 May not your crescent fear for name and
 fame
 Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
 Why did the King dwell on my name to
 me?
 Mine own name shames me, seeming a
 reproach,
 Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
 Caught from his mother's arms—the
 wondrous one
 Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
 She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
 Heard on the winding waters, eve and
 morn
 She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair, my
 child,
 As a king's son," and often in her arms
 She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
 Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er
 it be!
 For what am I? what profits me my name
 Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and
 have it:
 Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain:
 Now grown a part of me: but what use
 in it?
 To make men worse by making my sin
 known?
 Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
 Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
 Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must
 break
 These bonds that so defame me: not with-
 out
 She wills it: would I, if she will'd it?
 nay,
 Who knows? but if I would not, then may
 God,
 I pray him, send a sudden angel down
 To seize me by the hair and bear me
 far,
 And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
 Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.
 So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful
 pain,
 Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE HOLY GRAIL

[1869]

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess
 done
 In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale
 Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd
 the Pure,
 Had past into the silent life of prayer,
 Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the
 cowl
 The helmet in an abbey far away
 From Camelot, there, and not long after,
 died.
 And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
 Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the
 rest,
 And honor'd him, and wrought into his
 heart
 A way by love that waken'd love within,
 To answer that which came: and as they
 sat
 Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening
 half
 The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
 That puff'd the swaying branches into
 smoke
 Above them, ere the summer when he
 died,
 The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:
 'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree
 smoke,
 Spring after spring, for half a hundred
 years;
 For never have I known the world without,
 Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but
 thee,
 When first thou camest—such a courtesy
 Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—I
 knew
 For one of those who eat in Arthur's
 hall;
 For good ye are and bad, and like to
 coins,
 Some true, some light, but every one of you
 Stamp'd with the image of the King; and
 now
 Tell me, what drove thee from the Table
 Round,
 My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'
 'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such pas-
 sion mine.
 But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
 Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
 And earthly heats that spring and sparkle
 out
 Among us in the jousts, while women
 watch
 Who wins, who falls; and waste the spir-
 itual strength
 Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail! —
I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here
too much
We moulder — as to things without I
mean —

Yet one of your own knights, a guest of
ours,

Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so
low

We heard not half of what he said. What
is it?

The phantom of a cup that comes and
goes?"

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd
Percivale.

'The cup, the cup itself, from which our
Lord

Drank at the last sad supper with his
own.

This, from the blessed land of Aromat —
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah — the good
saint

Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our
Lord.

And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at
once,

By faith, of all his ills. But then the
times

Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to heaven, and dis-
appear'd.'

To whom the monk: 'From our old books
I know

That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to
build;

And there he built with wattles from the
marsh

A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but
seem

Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?"

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister; and if ever holy maid

With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which, being rudely blunted, glanced and
shot

Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And
yet,

Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous
race,

Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the
more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or
what

Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King
Arthur made

His Table Round, and all men's hearts
became

Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come
again;

But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it
would come,
And heal the world of all their wicked-
ness!

"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might it
come

To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay,"
said he,

"I know not, for thy heart is pure as
snow."

And so she pray'd and fasted, till the
sun

Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I
thought

She might have risen and floated when I
saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with
me.

And when she came to speak, behold her
eyes

Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness!

And "O my brother Percivale," she said,
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy
Grail:

For, waked at dead of night, I heard a
sound

As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's
use

To hunt by moonlight;' and the slender
sound

As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me — O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch
with hand,

Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver
beam,

And down the long beam stole the Holy
Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were
dyed
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the
walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and
pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and
pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be
heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of
this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd
Always, and many among us many a
week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever
moved
Among us in white armor, Galahad,
"God make thee good as thou art beauti-
ful!"
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight;
and none
In so young youth was ever made a
knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he
heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they
seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some
said
Begotten by enchantment — chattering they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies — we know not whence
they come;
For when was Lancelot wand'ringly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore
away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of
hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her
feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver
thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound
it on him,

Saying: "My knight, my love, my knight
of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with
mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have
seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown
thee king
Far in the spiritual city:" and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid
her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant
chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in
and out

The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it "the Siege Perilous,"
Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he
said,
"No man could sit but he should lose him-
self:"

And once by misadventure Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's
chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we
heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear
than day;

And down the long beam stole the Holy
Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it
past.

But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and swore a
vow.

'I swear a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would
ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad swore the
vow,

And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,
 sware,
 And Lancelot sware, and many among the
 knights,
 And Gawain sware, and louder than the
 rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking
 him,
 'What said the King? Did Arthur take
 the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale, 'the
 King,

Was not in hall: for early that same day,
 Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit bold,
 An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
 Crying on help: for all her shining hair
 Was smear'd with earth, and either milky
 arm

Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all
 she wore

Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
 In tempest: so the King arose and went
 To smoke the scandalous hive of those
 wild bees

That made such honey in his realm. How-
 beit

Some little of this marvel he too saw,
 Returning o'er the plain that then began
 To darken under Camelot; whence the
 King

Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there! the
 roofs

Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-
 smoke!

Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the
 bolt!"

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
 As having there so oft with all his knights
 Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty
 hall,

Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
 For all the sacred mount of Camelot,

And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
 Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,

By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing
 brook,

Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
 And four great zones of sculpture, set
 betwixt

With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
 And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,

And in the second men are slaying beasts,
 And on the third are warriors, perfect
 men,

And on the fourth are men with growing
 wings,

And over all one statue in the mould
 Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,

And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern
 Star.

And eastward fronts the statue, and the
 crown

And both the wings are made of gold,
 and flame

At sunrise till the people in far fields,
 Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
 Behold it, crying, "We have still a king."

'And, brother, had you known our hall
 within,

Broader and higher than any in all the
 lands!

Where twelve great windows blazon Ar-
 thur's wars,

And all the light that falls upon the board
 Streams thro' the twelve great battles of
 our King.

Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
 Wealthy with wandering lines of mount
 and mere,

Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
 And also one to the west, and counter to it,

And blank: and who shall blazon it? when
 and how?—

O, there, perchance, when all our wars are
 done,

The brand Excalibur will be cast away!

'So to this hall full quickly rode the
 King,

In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
 Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,
 wrapt

In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
 And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw

The golden dragon sparkling over all;
 And many of those who burnt the hold,
 their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with
 smoke and sear'd,

Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
 Full of the vision, prest: and then the
 King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"—
 Because the hall was all in tumult—some

Vowing, and some protesting,—"what is
 this?"

'O brother, when I told him what had
 chanced,

My sister's vision and the rest, his face
 Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,

When some brave deed seem'd to be done
 in vain,

Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he
 cried,

"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the
 vow."

Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been
 here,

My King, thou wouldst have sworn." "Yea,
 yea," said he,

"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the
 Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the holy thing,
I swear a vow to follow it till I saw."

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."

"Lo, now," said Arthur, "have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,
"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
"O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.""

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King,
"for such

As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye that follow but the leader's bell,"—
Brother, the King was hard upon his knights,—

"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,

Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales"—

For thus it pleased the King to range me close

After Sir Galahad;—"nay," said he, "but men

With strength and will to right the wrong'd,
of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed

The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—

But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.

Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm

Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,

Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires

Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,

Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet

The morrow morn once more in one full field

Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,

Before ye leave him for this quest, may count

The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,

Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

"So when the sun broke next from underground,

All the great Table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,

So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like since Arthur came;

And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew

So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,

Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!"

"But when the next day brake from underground—

O brother, had you known our Camelot.
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,

So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs

Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass; and lower, 'and where the long

Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks

Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers

Fell as we past; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,

Calling "God speed!" but in the ways below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor

Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak

For grief, and all in middle street the Queen.

Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,

"This madness has come on us for our
sins."
So to the Gate of the Three Queens we
came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and
thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down the
knights,
So many and famous names; and never
yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so
green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I
knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our
King,
That most of us would follow wandering
fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of
old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This quest is not for
thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, "This quest is not for
thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my
thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then
a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping
white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the
brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest
here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the quest;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And thirsting in a land of sand and
thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby
she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she
rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who
should say,

"Rest here;" but when I touch'd her, lo!
she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my
thirst.
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the
world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the
field
The plowman left his plowing and fell
down
Before it; where it glitter'd on her pail
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell
down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had
risen.

Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armor with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels, and his horse
In golden armor jewelled everywhere:
And on the splendor came, flashing me
blind,
And seem'd to me the lord of all the
world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he
meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he,
too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and
thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top a city wall'd: the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into
heaven.
And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and
these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Perci-
vale!
Thou mightiest and thou purest among
men!"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at
top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I
past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there
I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou?" and even as
he spoke
Fell into dust and disappear'd, and I

Was left alone once more and cried in
grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust!"

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the
vale

Was lowest found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he
said:

"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made
Himself

Naked of glory for his mortal change,
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is
thine,'

And all her form shone forth with sudden
light

So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the
east;

But her thou hast not known: for what
is this

Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy
sins?

Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made an
end,

In silver armor suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance and enter'd, and we knelt in
prayer.

And there the hermit slaked my burning
thirst,

And at the sacring of the mass I saw

The holy elements alone; but he,

"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the
Grail,

The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child

That smote itself into the bread and went;

And hither am I come; and never yet

Hath what thy sister taught me first to
see,

This holy thing, 'fail'd from my side, nor
come

Cover'd, but moving with me night and
day,

Fainter by day, but always in the night

Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd
marsh

Blood-red, and on the naked mountain
top

Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this

I rode,

Shattering all evil customs everywhere,

And past thro' Pagan realms, and made
them mine,

And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore
them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength
of this

Come victor. But my time is hard at
hand,

And hence I go; and one will crown me
king

Far in the spiritual city; and come thou,
too,

For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on
mine,

Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.

Then, when the day began to wane, we
went.

'There rose a hill that none but man
could climb,

Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-
courses—

Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it,
storm

Round us and death; for every moment
glanced

His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and
thick

The lightnings here and there to left and
right

Struck, till the dry old trunks about us,
dead,

Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we
found

On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil
smell,

Part black, part whiten'd with the bones
of men,

Not to be crost, save that some ancient
king

Had built a way, where, link'd with many
a bridge,

A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by
bridge,

And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the
heavens

Open'd and blazed with thunder such as
seem'd

Shoutings of all the sons of God: and
first

At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armor starry-clear;

And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous
cloud

And with exceeding swiftess ran the boat,
If boat it were—I saw not whence it
came,

And when the heavens open'd and blazed again:

Roaring, I saw him like a silver star —
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been with-
drawn.

Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond
the star

I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl —
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —
Strike from the sea; and from the star
there shot

A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail.
Which never eyes on earth again shall
see.

Then fell the floods of heaven drowning
the deep,
And how my feet recrost the deathful
ridge

No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and
thence

Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vexed me more,
return'd

To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's
wars.'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius, — 'for in
sooth

These ancient books — and they would win
thee — teem,

Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims, and then go forth and
pass

Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls — and mingle with our
folk;

And knowing every honest face of theirs
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teething, lyings-
in,

And mirthful sayings, children of the
place,

That have no meaning half a league away;
Or lulling random squabbles when they
rise,

Chafferings and chatterings at the market-
cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world
of mine,

Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs —
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your
quest,
No man, no woman?'

Then Sir Percivale:

'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O, my
brother,

Why wilt thou shame me to confess to
thee

How far I falter'd from my quest and
vow?

For after I had lain so many nights,
A bed-mate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to
wan

And meagre, and the vision had not come;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of
it.

Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower;
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of
old

A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing, yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was
dead,

And all his land and wealth and state were
hers.

And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me, for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair
morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard under-
neath

Her castle-walls, she stole upon my
walk,

And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first
time,

And gave herself and all her wealth to
me.

Then I remember'd Arthur's warning
word,

That most of us would follow wandering
fires,

And the quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and
tongue:

"We have heard of thee: thou art our
greatest knight,

Our Lady says it, and we well believe:

Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."
O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own
self,
And even the holy quest, and all but her;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her nor anything upon
earth.'

Then said the monk: 'Poor men, when
yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires.
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
That brought thee here to this poor house
of ours
Where all the brethren are so hard, to
warm
My cold heart with a friend: but O the
pity
To find thine own first love once more —
to hold,
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine
arms,
Or all but hold, and then — cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed!
For we that want the warmth of double
life,
We that are plagued with dreams of some-
thing sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich. —
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthly-wise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none be-
side,
None of your knights?'

'Yea, so,' said Percivale:
One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon,
And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him,
and he me,
And each made joy of either; then he
ask'd:
"Where is he? hast thou seen him — Lance-
lot? — Once,"
Said good Sir Bors, "he dash'd across me —
mad,
And maddening what he rode; and when
I cried,
'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy?' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard, and I ride
apace,
For now there is a lion in the way!'
So vanish'd."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk

And scandal of our table, had return'd;
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship
him
That ill to him is ill to them, to Bors
Beyond the rest: he well had been con-
tent
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have
seen,
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the holy quest;
If God would send the vision, well; if not,
The quest and he were in the hands of
Heaven.

'And then, with small adventure met, Sir
Bors
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their
crag,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were
left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven; and their
wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can
trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at
him
And this high quest as at a simple thing,
Told him he follow'd — almost Arthur's
words —
A mocking fire: "What other fire than he
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom
blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is
warm'd?"
And when his answer chafed them, the
rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their
priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him
into a cell
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden
there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep
Over him till by miracle — what else? —
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and
fell,
Such as no wind could move; and thro'
the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came
a night
Still as the day was loud, and thro' the gap
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table
Round —
For, brother, so one night, because they roll
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named
the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King —
And these, like bright eyes of familiar
friends,
In on him shone: "And then to me, to me,"

Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself—
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me!—

In color like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
A sharp quick thunder." Afterwards, a maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.

To whom the monk: 'And I remember now
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An outdoor sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd
The city, found ye all your knights return'd,
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?"

Then answer'd Percivale: 'And that can I,
Brother, and truly; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
Raw that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the dais-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
And those that had not, stood before the King,
Who, when he saw me, rose and bade me hail,
Saying: "A welfare in thine eyes reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill or plain, at sea or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings,
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us

Half-wrench'd a golden wing; but now—the quest,
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glaston-bury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this quest for thee?"

'"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the quest was not for me;
For I was much a-wearied of the quest,
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

'He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;"
and Bors,
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:
I saw it," and the tears were in his eyes.

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the King,
"my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this quest avail'd for thee?"

"Our mightiest!" answered Lancelot,
with a groan;
"O King!"—and when he paused me-
thought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for
slime,
Slime of the ditch; but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,

Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as each,
 Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
 Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
 They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
 To one most holy saint, who wept and said
 That, save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
 My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
 That I would work according as he will'd.
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
 My madness came upon me as of old,
 And whipt me into waste fields far away.
 There was I beaten down by little men,
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
 And shadow of my spear had been enow
 To scare them from me once; and then I came
 All in my folly to the naked shore,
 Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;
 But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
 So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
 Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
 Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
 Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
 Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
 Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
 And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat,
 Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain;
 And in my madness to myself I said,
 'I will embark and I will lose myself,
 And in the great sea wash away my sin.'
 I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
 Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
 And with me drove the moon and all the stars;
 And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
 I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
 And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
 Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,
 A castle like a rock upon a rock,
 With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
 And steps that met the breaker! There was none
 Stood near it but a lion on each side
 That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
 Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs,

There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
 Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
 Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between,
 And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
 'Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
 Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with violence
 The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
 And up into the sounding hall I past;
 But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
 No bench nor table, painting on the wall
 Or shield of knight, only the rounded moon
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
 But always in the quiet house I heard,
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
 To the eastward. Up I climb'd a thousand steps
 With pain; as in a dream I seem'd to climb
 For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
 A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
 'Glory and joy and honor to our Lord
 And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail!'
 Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
 It gave, and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
 As from a seven-times heated furnace, I,
 Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
 With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away—
 O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
 All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
 Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes!
 And but for all my madness and my sin,
 And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
 That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
 And cover'd, and this quest was not for me."
 'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
 The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
 Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words,—
 A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
 Now bolden'd by the silence of his King,—
 Well, I will tell thee: "O King, my liege," he said,
 "Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
 When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
 But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
 Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
 Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
 But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,

I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward."

"Deafer," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things,
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from
heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot, and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their
sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could
but speak
His music by the framework and the
chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

"Nay — but thou errest, Lancelot: never
yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and
man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest
of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobie-
ness;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its
flower.

"And spake I not too truly, O my
knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest
That most of them would follow wander-
ing fires,
Lost in the quagmire? — lost to me and
gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order — scarce return'd a
tith —
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw.
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And, leaving human wrongs to right them-
selves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him elsewhere.

"And some among you held that if the
King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn
the vow:
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the
hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow,

Who may not wander from the allotted
field
Before his work be done, but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come as they will; and many a time they
come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not
earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not
light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision — yea, his very hand and foot —
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have
seen."

'So spake the King: I knew not all he
meant.'

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and
sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was
still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White
Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and
sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all
the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd
the may,
Had been — their wont — a-maying and re-
turn'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her
best
Enid and lissome Vivien, of her court
The williest and the worst; and more than
this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by

Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand
 Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
 So from the high wall and the flowering grove
 Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,
 And cast him as a worm upon the way;
 But when he knew the prince tho' marr'd with dust,
 He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
 Made such excuses as he might, and these
 Full knightly without scorn: for in those days
 No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
 But, if a man were halt, or hunch'd, in him
 By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,
 Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
 And he was answer'd softly by the King
 And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help
 To raise the prince, who rising twice or thrice
 Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:
 But, ever after, the small violence done
 Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
 As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
 A little bitter pool about a stone
 On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
 This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd
 Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
 Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries,
 'I shudder, some one steps across my grave.'
 Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
 Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye.
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
 To help it from the death that cannot die,
 And save it even in extremes, began
 To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,
 In the dead night, grim faces came and went
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,

That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
 Held her awake: or if she slept she dream'd
 An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
 Before it till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—
 When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew,
 Till even the clear face of the guileless King,
 And trustful courtesies of household life,
 Became her bane; and at the last she said,
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land;
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
 And if we meet again some evil chance
 Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
 Before the people and our lord the King.'
 And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
 And still they met and met. Again she said,
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'
 And then they were agreed upon a night—
 When the good King should not be there—to meet
 And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
 She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
 And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
 Low on the border of her couch they sat
 Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
 A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
 His creatures to the basement of the tower
 For testimony; and crying with full voice,
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,'
 aroused
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong,
 and he fell
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
 And all was still. Then she, 'The end is come,
 And I am shamed for ever;' and he said:
 'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
 And fly to my strong castle over-seas:
 There will I hide thee till my life shall end,
 There hold thee with my life against the world.'

She answer'd: 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?

Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.

Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!

Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou

Unwedded; yet rise now, and let us fly,

For I will draw me into sanctuary,

And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse,

Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,

And then they rode to the divided way,

There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past,

Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,

Back to his land; but she to Almesbury

Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,

And heard the spirits of the waste and weald

Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:

And in herself she moan'd, 'Too late, too late!'

Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn.

A blot in heaven, the raven, flying high, Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a field of death;

For now the heathen of the Northern Sea, Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,

Begin to slay the folk and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she spake

There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine enemies

Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,

Receive and yield me sanctuary, nor ask

Her name to whom ye yield it till her time To tell you;' and her beauty, grace, and

power

Wrought as a charm upon them, and they

spared

To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode For many a week, unknown, among the

nuns,

Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,

nor sought,

Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for

shrift,

But communed only with the little maid,

Who pleased her with a babbling heed-

lessness

Which often lured her from herself; but

now,

This night, a rumor wildly blown about

Came that Sir Modred had usurp'd the

realm

And leagued him with the heathen, while

the King

Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,

'With what a hate the people and the King Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon her hands

Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd

No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late! so late!'

What hour, I wonder now?' and when she drew

No answer, by and by began to hum

An air the nuns had taught her: 'Late, so late!'

Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,

'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,

Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.'

Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!

Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.

Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do repent, And learning this, the bridegroom will re-

lent.

Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!

O, let us in, that we may find the light!

Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?

O, let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!

No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passion-

ately,

Her head upon her hands, remembering

Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.

Then said the little novice prattling to her:

'O pray you, noble lady, weep no more; But let my words—the words of one so

small,

Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,

And if I do not there is penance given—

Comfort your sorrows; for they do not

flow

From evil done: right sure am I of that,

Who see your tender grace and state-

liness.

But weigh your sorrows with our lord the

King's,

And weighing find them less; for gone is he

To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot

there,

Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;

And Modred whom he left in charge of all.
 The traitor—Ah, sweet lady, the King's
 grief
 For his own self, and his own Queen, and
 realm.
 Must needs be thrice as great as any of
 ours!
 For me, I thank the saints, I am not great;
 For if there ever come a grief to me
 I cry my cry in silence, and have done:
 None knows it, and my tears have brought
 me good.
 But even were the griefs of little ones
 As great as those of great ones, yet this
 grief
 Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
 That, howsoever much they may desire
 Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud;
 As even here they talk at Almesbury
 About the good King and his wicked
 Queen,
 And were I such a King with such a
 Queen,
 Well might I wish to veil her wickedness.
 But were I such a King it could not be.'

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the
 Queen,
 'Will the child kill me with her innocent
 talk?'
 But openly she answer'd, 'Must not I,
 If this false traitor have displaced his lord.
 Grieve with the common grief of all the
 realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's
 grief,
 That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
 Hath wrought confusion in the Table
 Round
 Which good King Arthur founded, years
 ago,
 With signs and miracles and wonders, there
 At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself
 again,
 'Will the child kill me with her foolish
 prate?'
 But openly she spake and said to her,
 'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
 What canst thou know of Kings and Tables
 Round,
 Or what of signs and wonders, but the
 signs
 And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously:
 'Yea, but I know: the land was full of
 signs
 And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
 So said my father, and himself was knight
 Of the great Table—at the founding of it,
 And rode thereto from Lyonesse; and he
 said

That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
 After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
 Strange music, and he paused, and turn-
 ing—there,
 All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
 Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
 And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
 He saw them—headland after headland
 flame
 Far on into the rich heart of the west:
 And in the light the white mermaiden
 swam,
 And strong man-breasted things stood from
 the sea,
 And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the
 land,
 To which the little elves of chasm and
 cleft
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
 So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
 Next morning, while he past the dim-lit
 woods,
 Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy
 Come dashing down on a tall wayside
 flower,
 That shook beneath them as the thistle
 shakes
 When three gray linnets wrangle for the
 seed:
 And still at evenings on before his horse
 The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and
 broke
 Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and
 broke
 Flying, for all the land was full of life.
 And when at last he came to Camelot,
 A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
 Swung round the lighted lantern of the
 hall;
 And in the hall itself was such a feast
 As never man had dream'd; for every
 knight
 Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
 By hands unseen; and even as he said
 Down in the cellars merry bloated things
 Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the
 butts
 While the wine ran: so glad were spirits
 and men
 Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bit-
 terly,
 'Were they so glad? ill prophets were they
 all,
 Spirits and men: could none of them fore-
 see,
 Not even thy wise father with his signs
 And wonders, what has fallen upon the
 realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again:
 'Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father
 said,

Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Even in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming
wave;

And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the
hills

With all their dewy hair blown back like
flame.

So said my father — and that night the
bard

Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the
King

As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at
those

Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois:
For there was no man knew from whence
he came;

But after tempest, when the long wave
broke

All down the thundering shores of Bude
and Bos,

There came a day as still as heaven, and
then

They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,
And that was Arthur; and they foster'd
him

Till he by miracle was approven King:
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth; and could he
find

A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the
world.

But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the
harp,

And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would
have fallen,

But that they stay'd him up; nor would he
tell

His vision; but what doubt that he fore-
saw

This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they have
set her on,

Our simple-seeming abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me,' and bow'd her head nor
spake.

Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd
hands,

Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her gad-
ding tongue

Full o'ten, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me
too

Nor let me shame my father's memory,
one

Of noblest manners, tho' himself would
say

Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers
back,

And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy —

And pray you check me if I ask amiss —
But pray you, which had noblest, while you
moved

Among them, Lancelot or our lord the
King?

Then the pale Queen look'd up and
answer'd her:

'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field

Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field

Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such
fair fruit?

Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-
fold

Less noble, being, as all rumor runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the
Queen:

'O, closed about by narrowing nunnery-
walls,

What knowest thou of the world and all its
lights

And shadows, all the wealth and all the
woe?

If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,

Pray for him that he scape the doom of
fire,

And weep for her who drew him to his
doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for
both;

But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think; sweet lady, yours would
be

Such as they are, were you the sinful
Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where
she would heal;

For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who
cried:

'Such as thou art be never maiden more

For ever! thou their tool! set on to plague
And play upon and harry me, petty spy
And traitress! When that storm of anger
broke

From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
White as her veil, and stood before the
Queen

As tremulously as foam upon the beach
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
And when the Queen had added, 'Get thee
hence!'

Fled frightened. Then that other left alone
Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,
Saying in herself: 'The simple, fearful
child

Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful
guilt,

Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent!
For what is true repentance but in thought—
Not even in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to
us?

And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

And even in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot
came,

Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
Ambassador, to yield her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure,—for
the time

Was war-time, and as yet no sin was
dream'd,—

Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreking thro'
the earth,

And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a
trance,

And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw the
King

Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to
find

Her journey done, glanced at him, thought
him cold,

High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not
like him,
'Not like my Lancelot'—while she brooded
thus

And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery
ran,

Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King!' She
sat

Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed
feet

Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she
fell,

And grovell'd with her face against the
floor.

There with her milk-white arms and shad-
ow hair

She made her face a darkness from the
King,

And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a
voice,

Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but, tho' changed,
the King's:

'Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honor'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.

The children born of thee are sword and
fire,

Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern
Sea;

Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right
arm,

The mightiest of my knights; abode with
me,

Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I
come—from him,

From waging bitter war with him; and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse
way,

Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a knight
was slain;

And many more and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.

And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.

And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I
live,

To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my
death.

Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
 Have err'd not, that I march to meet my
 doom.
 Thou hast not made my life so sweet to
 me,
 That I the King should greatly care to live;
 For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
 Bear with me for the last time while I
 show,
 Even for thy sake, the sin which thou hast
 sinn'd.
 For when the Roman left us, and their law
 Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
 Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a
 deed
 Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
 But I was first of all the kings who drew
 The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
 The realms together under me, their Head,
 In that fair Order of my Table Round,
 A glorious company, the flower of men,
 To serve as model for the mighty world,
 And be the fair beginning of a time.
 I made them lay their hands in mine and
 swear
 To reverence the King, as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as
 their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To honor his own word as if his God's,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,
 Until they won her; for indeed I knew
 Of no more subtle master under heaven
 Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
 Not only to keep down the base in man,
 But teach high thought, and amiable words
 And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
 And love of truth, and all that makes a
 man.
 And all this throve before I wedded thee,
 Believing, "Lo, mine helpmate, one to feel
 My purpose and rejoicing in my joy!"
 Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
 Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
 Then others, following these my mightiest
 knights,
 And drawing foul ensample from fair
 names,
 Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
 Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
 And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
 I guard as God's high gift from scathe
 and wrong,
 Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
 How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
 To sit once more within his lonely hall,
 And miss the wonted number of my
 knights,
 And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
 As in the golden days before thy sin.

For which of us who might be left could
 speak
 Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at
 thee?
 And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
 Thy shadow still would glide from room
 to room,
 And I should evermore be vexed with thee
 In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
 Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
 For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love
 thy lord,
 Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
 I am not made of so slight elements.
 Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
 I hold that man the worst of public foes
 Who either for his own or children's sake,
 To save his blood from scandal, lets the
 wife
 Whom he knows false abide and rule the
 house:
 For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
 Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
 She like a new disease, unknown to men,
 Creeps, no precaution used, among the
 crowd,
 Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and
 saps
 The fealty of our friends, and stirs the
 pulse
 With devil's leaps, and poisons half the
 young.
 Worst of the worst were that man he that
 reigns!
 Better the King's waste hearth and aching
 heart
 Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
 The mockery of my people and their bane!
 He paused, and in the pause she crept an
 inch
 Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
 Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
 Then waiting by the doors the war-horse
 neigh'd
 As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:
 'Yet think not that I come to urge thy
 crimes;
 I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
 I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
 To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
 My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
 The wrath which forced my thoughts on
 that fierce law,
 The doom of treason and the flaming
 death,—
 When first I learnt thee hidden here,—is
 past.
 The pang—which, while I weigh'd thy
 heart with one
 Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
 Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
 And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,

Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives! do thou for thine own soul the
rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's; nay, they never were the
King's.

I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine
own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,
"I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my
life

So far that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and
know

I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I
hence.

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet
blow:

They summon me their King to lead mine
hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they
call

My sister's son—no kin of mine, who
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,
and knights,

Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet
myself

Death, or I know not what mysterious
doom.

And thou remaining here wilt learn the
event;

But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more—
Farewell!

And while she grovelling at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her
neck,

And in the darkness o'er her fallen head
Perceived the waving of his hands that
blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps
were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish
found

The casement: 'peradventure,' so she
thought,

'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a
light

Stood, and he gave them charge about the
Queen,

To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was
lower'd,

To which for crest the golden dragon
clung

Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the
lights,

The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire,
And even then he turn'd; and more and
more

The moony vapor rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him
gray

And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and
cried aloud,

'O Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a
cliff

Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the
vale—

Went on in passionate utterance:

'Gone—my lord!

Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his fare-
well.

His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the
King,

My own true lord! how dare I call him
mine?

The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?

What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.

The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to
months,

The months will add themselves and make
the years,

The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.

I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world—
What else? what hope? I think there was
a hope,

Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;

His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God! Ah great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that
took

Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the
height

To which I would not or I could not
climb—

I thought I could not breathe in that fine
air,

That pure severity of perfect light—
I yearn'd for warmth and color which I
found

In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. 'Is there none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great battle?
none:

Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair
world,

Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known;
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we
see it,

Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand

Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd
and saw

The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to
her,

'Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven?'
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping; and her heart was
loosed

Within her, and she wept with these and
said:

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who
broke

The vast design and purpose of the King.
O, shut me round with narrowing nunnery-
walls,

Meek maidens, from the voices crying,
"Shame!"

I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me
still.

So let me, if you do not shudder at me,

Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like
you,

Fast with your fasts, not feasting with
your feasts;

Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at
your joys,

But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your
shrines;

Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal
mine own;

And so wear out in alms-deed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the
King.'

She said: they took her to themselves,
and she

Still hoping, fearing, 'is it yet too late?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their abness
died.

Then she, for her good deeds and her pure
life,

And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had
borne,

Was chosen abbess, there, an abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an abbess,
past

To where beyond these voices there is peace.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

[1869]

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than
a voice

In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other
minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedi-
vere,

Who slowly paced among the slumbering
host,

Heard in his tent the moanings of the
King:

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His
fields,

But in His ways with men I find Him
not.

I waged His wars, and now I pass and
die.

O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the
world,

But had not force to shape it as he
would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense
and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is:
Perchance, because we see not to the
close:—
For I, being simple, thought to work His
will,
And have but stricken with the sword in
vain
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and
friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my
death:
Nay — God my Christ — I pass but shall not
die.'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the
west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain
kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain
blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his
ear
Went shrilling: 'Hollow, hollow all de-
light!
Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass
away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight!
And fainter onward, like wild birds that
change
Their season in the night and wail their
way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind
the dream
Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim
cries
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with
wail
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and
call'd:
'Who spake? A dream. O light upon the
wind,
Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these
dim cries
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste
and wild
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and
spake:
'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,

Elves, and the harmless glamour of the
field;
But in their stead thy name and glory
cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in
death
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;
And care not thou for dreams from him,
but rise—
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and
knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but
grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and
thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the
King.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move than when we strove in
youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought
with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman
wall,
And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom
is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights him-
self.
And they my knights, who loved me once,
the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to
me.
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro' this blind haze which, ever since I
saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host
by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by
league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse —
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples
dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King;
And there, that day when the great light
of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they
closed.

Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
 Like this last, dim, weird battle of the
 west.
 A death-white mist slept over sand and
 sea,
 Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it,
 drew
 Down with his blood, till all his heart was
 cold
 With formless fear; and even on Arthur
 fell
 Confusion, since he saw not whom he
 fought.
 For friend and foe were shadows in the
 mist,
 And friend slew friend not knowing whom
 he slew;
 And some had visions out of golden
 youth,
 And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
 Look in upon the battle; and in the mist
 Was many a noble deed, many a base,
 And chance and craft and strength in single
 fights,
 And ever and anon with host to host
 Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard
 mail hewn,
 Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands,
 the crash
 Of battle-axes on shatter'd helms, and
 shrieks
 After the Christ, of those who falling
 down
 Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the
 mist;
 And shouts of heathen and the traitor
 knights,
 Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-
 phemies,
 Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the
 lungs
 In that close mist, and cryings for the
 light,
 Moans of the dying, and voices of the
 dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after
 wail
 Of suffering, silence follows, or thro'
 death
 Or death-like swoon, thus over all that
 shore,
 Save for some whisper of the seething
 seas,
 A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous
 day
 Grew drearier toward twilight falling,
 came
 A bitter wind, clear from the north, and
 blew
 The mist aside, and with that wind the
 tide

Rose, and the pale King glanced across
 the field
 Of battle: but no man was moving there;
 Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
 Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
 Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
 Swaying the helpless hands, and up and
 down
 Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
 And shiver'd brands that once had fought
 with Rome,
 And rolling far along the gloomy shores
 The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
 And whiter than the mist that all day long
 Had held the field of battle was the King:

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes
 the world,
 And wastes the narrow realm whereon we
 move,
 And beats upon the faces of the dead,
 My dead, as tho' they had not died for
 me? —
 O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fallen
 Confusion; till I know not what I am,
 Nor whence I am, nor whether I be
 king;
 Behold, I seem but king among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: 'My
 King;
 King everywhere! and so the dead have
 kings,
 There also will I worship thee as king.
 Yet still thy life is whole, and still I
 live
 Who love thee; but who hates thee, he
 that brought
 The heathen back among us, yonder
 stands,
 Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine
 house.'

Then spake the King: 'My house hath
 been my doom.
 But call not thou this traitor of my house
 Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with
 me.
 My house are rather they who swore my
 vows,
 Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me
 king.
 And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
 When all the purport of my throne hath
 fail'd,
 That quick or dead thou holdest me for
 king.
 King am I, whatsoever be their cry:
 And one last act of kinghood shalt thou
 see
 Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the
 King

Made at the man: then Modred smote his
liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen
sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one
blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and, all but slain himself, he
fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound
was deep,

The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren
land:

On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was
full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a
sleep

They sleep—the men I loved. I think
that we

Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly
deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.

I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come
again

To rule once more; but, let what will
be he,

I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest
how

In those old days, one summer noon, an
arm

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd
across

And took it, and have worn it, like a
king;

And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere;
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
thus,

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee
word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he
stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of
tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind
sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He,
stepping down
By zigzag paths and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud,
ran forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the
hilt;

For all the haft twinkled with diamond
sparks,

Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he
stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the
marge.

So strode he back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which
I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint
and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy
name,

Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixt in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he
smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many
men.

What good should follow this, if this were
done?

What harm, undone? Deep harm to dis-
obey,

Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king de-
mand

An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he
does.

What record or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? But were this
kept,

Stored in some treasure-house of mighty
kings,

Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying: "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely Maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
deeps

Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the after-
time

To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were
lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own con-
ceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in
wrath:

'Ah miserable, and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou
art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious
hilt;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence:

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged

Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the
sword,

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The
great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd
in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur;

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.

And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd
him

Three times, and drew him under in the
mere.

And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker
breath:

'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or
seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the
gems

Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
ing him;

But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd
him

Three times, and drew him under in the
mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-
ing hard:

'My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were
gone.

Make broad thy shoulders to receive my
weight,

And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half
rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not
words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one
knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of
tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd
the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear,
'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to
ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he
walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like
a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and
right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as
he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
heels—
And on a sudden, lo, the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon!

Then saw they how there hove a dusky
barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were
ware
That all the decks were dense with stately
forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—
by these
Three queens with crowns of gold: and
from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one
comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the
world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the
barge.'
So to the barge they came. There those
three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King,
and wept.
But she that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed
his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining
loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face
was white
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing
east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd
with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd
with dust,
Or clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixt with the knightly growth that fringed
his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Ah! my lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my
eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble
chance,
And every chance brought out a noble
knight.
Such times have been not since the light
that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dis-
solved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the
years,
Among new men, strange faces, other
minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the
barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to
new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the
world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?

I have lived my life, and that which I have
done
May He within himself make pure! but
thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are
wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore,
let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or
goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer
Both for themselves and those who call
them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
For all my mind is clouded with a doubt—
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard
lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer
sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-
breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the
flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bed-
ivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of
dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for ever-
more,
The stillness of the dead world's winter
dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King
is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird
rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep he
goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly
clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag,
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,
and cried:
'He passes to be king among the dead,

And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but—if he come no
more—
O me, be yon dark 'queens in yon black
boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat
we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living
light,
They stood before his throne in silence,
friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there
came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and
clomb
Even to the highest he could climb, and
saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the
King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new
year.

SONG FROM THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

[1859]

TURN, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower
the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm,
and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate.

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile
or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or
down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Smile and we smile, the lords of many
lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own
hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring
crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the
cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate.

SONG FROM MERLIN AND VIVIEN

[1859]

IN love, if love be 'love, if love be ours.
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal
powers:

Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

It is not worth the keeping; let it go:
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all.

SONG FROM QUEEN MARY

[1875]

LOW, LUTE, LOW!

HAPLESS doom of woman happy in betroth-
ing!

Beauty passes like a breath, and love is lost
in loathing.

Low, my lute; speak low, my lute, but say
the world is nothing—
Low, lute, low!

Love will hover round the flowers when
they first awaken;
Love will fly the fallen leaf, and not be
overtaken.

Low, my lute! O, low, my lute! we fade
and are forsaken—
Low, dear lute, low!

THE VOICE AND THE PEAK

[1874]

THE voice and the Peak,
Far over summit and lawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of
dawn!

All night have I heard the voice
Rave over the rocky bar,
But thou wert silent in heaven,
Above thee glided the star.

Hast thou no voice, O Peak,
That standest high above all?
'I am the voice of the Peak,
I roar and rave, for I fall.

'A thousand voices go
To North, South, East, and West;
They leave the heights and are troubled,
And moan and sink to their rest.

'The fields are fair beside them,
The chestnut towers in his bloom;
But they—they feel the desire of the
deep—
Fall, and follow their doom.

'The deep has power on the height,
And the height has power on the deep:
They are raised for ever and ever,
And sink again into sleep.'

Not raised for ever and ever,
But when their cycle is o'er,
The valley, the voice, the peak, the star
Pass, and are found no more.

The Peak is high and flush'd
At his highest with sunrise fire;
The Peak is high, and the stars are high,
And the thought of a man is higher.

A deep below the deep,
And a height beyond the height!
Our hearing is not hearing,
And our seeing is not sight.

The voice and the Peak
Far into heaven withdrawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of
dawn!

*First part of Eng. poetical
series by
"Butt & Givens"*

THE REVENGE

BALLAD OF THE FLEET
[1878]

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard
Grenville lay,
And a pinnacle, like a flutter'd bird, came
flying from far away;
"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have
sighted fifty-three!"
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: "'Fore
God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my
ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must
fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight
with fifty-three?"

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: "I know
you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with
them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are
lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I
left them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devil-
doms of Spain."

III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships
 of war that day,
 Till he melted like a cloud in the silent
 summer heaven;
 But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick
 men from the land
 Very carefully and slow,
 Men of Bideford in Devon,
 And we laid them on the ballast down
 below:
 For we brought them all aboard,
 And they blest him in their pain, that
 they were not left to Spain,
 To the thumb-screw and the stake, for
 the glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work
 the ship and to fight,
 And he sailed away from Flores till the
 Spaniard came in sight,
 With his huge sea-castles heaving upon
 the weather bow.
 "Shall we fight or shall we fly?
 Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
 For to fight is but to die!
 There 'll be little of us left by the time
 this sun be set."
 And Sir Richard said again: "We be all
 good English men.
 Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the
 children of the devil,
 For I never turn'd my back upon Don or
 devil yet."

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and
 we roar'd a hurrah, and so
 The little Revenge ran on sheer into the
 heart of the foe,
 With her hundred fighters on deck, and
 her ninety sick below;
 For half of their fleet to the right and
 half to the left were seen,
 And the little Revenge ran on thro' the
 long sea-lane between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down
 from their decks and laugh'd,
 Thousands of their seamen made mock
 at the mad little craft
 Running on and on, till delay'd
 By their mountain-like San Philip that, of
 fifteen hundred tons,
 And up-shadowing high above us with
 her yawning tiers of guns,
 Took the breath from our sails, and we
 stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung
 above us like a cloud
 Whence the thunderbolt will fall
 Long and loud,

Four galleons drew away
 From the Spanish fleet that day,
 And two upon the larboard and two upon
 the starboard lay,
 And the battle-thunder broke from them
 all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she be-
 thought herself and went
 Having that within her womb that had left
 her ill content;
 And the rest they came aboard us, and
 they fought us hand to hand,
 For a dozen times they came with their
 pikes and musqueteers,
 And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a
 dog that shakes his ears
 When he leaps from the water to the
 land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars
 came out far over the summer sea,
 But never a moment ceased the fight of
 the one and the fifty-three.
 Ship after ship, the whole night long, their
 high-built galleons came,
 Ship after ship, the whole night long, with
 her battle-thunder and flame:
 Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew
 back with her dead and her shame.
 For some were sunk and many were
 shatter'd, and so could fight us no
 more—
 God of battles, was ever a battle like this
 in the world before?

X

For he said, "Fight on! fight on!"
 Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
 And it chanced that, when half of the
 short summer night was gone,
 With a grisly wound to be drest he had
 left the deck,
 But a bullet struck him that was dress-
 ing it suddenly dead,
 And himself he was wounded again in
 the side and the head,
 And he said, "Fight on! fight on!"

XI

And the night went down, and the sun
 smiled out far over the summer sea,
 And the Spanish fleet with broken sides
 lay round us all in a ring;
 But they dared not touch us again, for
 they fear'd that we still could sting.
 So they watch'd what the end would be.
 And we had not fought them in vain,
 But in perilous plight were we,
 Seeing forty of our poor hundred were
 slain,
 And half of the rest of us maim'd for
 life
 In the crash of the cannonades and the
 desperate strife;

And the sick men down in the hold were
 most of them stark and cold,
 And the pikes were all broken or bent,
 and the powder was all of it spent;
 And the masts and the rigging were lying
 over the side;
 But Sir Richard cried in his English pride:
 "We have fought such a fight for a day
 and a night
 As may never be fought again!
 We have won great glory, my men!
 And a day less or more
 At sea or ashore,
 We die—does it matter when?
 Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink
 her, split her in twain!
 Fall into the hands of God, not into the
 hands of Spain!"

XII

And the gunner said, "Ay, ay," but the
 seamen made reply:
 "We have children, we have wives,
 And the Lord hath spared our lives.
 We will make the Spaniard promise, if
 we yield, to let us go;
 We shall live to fight again and to strike
 another blow."
 And the lion there lay dying, and they
 yielded to the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their
 flagship bore him then,
 Where they laid him by the mast, old
 Sir Richard caught at last,
 And they praised him to his face with
 their courtly foreign grace;
 But he rose upon their decks, and he
 cried:
 "I have fought for Queen and Faith like
 a valiant man and true;
 I have only done my duty as a man is
 bound to do.
 With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Gren-
 ville die!"
 And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been
 so valiant and true,
 And had holden the power and glory of
 Spain so cheap
 That he dared her with one little ship
 and his English few;
 Was he devil or man? He was devil for
 aught they knew,
 But they sank his body with honor down
 into the deep,
 And they mann'd the Revenge with a
 swarthier alien crew,
 And away she sail'd with her loss and
 long'd for her own;
 When a wind from the lands they had
 ruin'd awoke from sleep,

And the water began to heave and the
 weather to moan,
 And or ever that evening ended a great
 gale blew,
 And a wave like the wave that is raised
 by an earthquake grew,
 Till it smote on their hulls and their sails
 and their masts and their flags,
 And the whole sea plunged and fell on
 the shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,
 And the little Revenge herself went down
 by the island crags
 To be lost evermore in the main.

RIZPAH — Bill

17—

[1880]

I

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over
 land and sea—
 And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother,
 come out to me!"
 Why should he call me to-night, when
 he knows that I cannot go?
 For the downs are as bright as day, and
 the full moon stares at the snow.

II

We should be seen, my dear; they would
 spy us out of the town.
 The loud black nights for us, and the
 storm rushing over the down,
 When I cannot see my own hand, but
 am led by the creak of the chain,
 And grovel and grope for my son till I
 find myself drenched with the rain.

III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was
 there left to fall?
 I have taken them home, I have num-
 ber'd the bones, I have hidden them
 all.
 What am I saying? and what are you?
 do you come as a spy?
 Falls? what falls? who knows? As the
 tree falls so must it lie.

IV

Who let her in? how long has she been?
 you—what have you heard?
 Why did you sit so quiet? you never have
 spoken a word.
 O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—
 none of their spies—
 But the night has crept into my heart,
 and begun to darken my eyes.

V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what
 should you know of the night,
 The blast and the burning shame and
 the bitter frost and the fright?

I have done it, while you were asleep—
you were only made for the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and
now you may go your way.

VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, madam, to sit
by an old dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have
only an hour of life.
I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he
went out to die.
"They dared me to do it," he said, and
he never has told me a lie.
I whipped him for robbing an orchard
once when he was but a child—
"The farmer dared me to do it," he said;
he was always so wild—
And idle—and could n't be idle—my
Willy—he never could rest.
The King should have made him a soldier,
he would have been one of his
best.

VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates,
and they never would let him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail,
and he swore that he would;
And he took no life, but he took one
purse, and when all was done
He flung it among his fellows—"I 'll none
of it," said my son.

VIII

I came into court to the judge and the
lawyers. I told them my tale,
God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they
kill'd him for robbing the mail.
They hang'd him in chains for a show—
we had always borne a good name—
To be hang'd for a thief—and then put
away—is n't that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide!
but they set him so high
That all the ships of the world could
stare at him, passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and
horrible fowls of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer
who kill'd him and hang'd him there.

IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had
bid him my last good-bye;
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. "O
mother!" I heard him cry.
I could n't get back tho' I tried, he had
something further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The
jailer forced me away.

X

Then since I could n't but hear that cry
of my boy that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they
fasten'd me down on my bed.

"Mother, O mother!"—he call'd in the
dark to me year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—
you know that I could n't but hear;
And then at the last they found I had
grown so stupid and still
They let me abroad again—but the crea-
tures had worked their will.

XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of
my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and
you, will you call it a theft?—
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me,
the bones that had laughed and had
cried—
Theirs? O, no! they are mine—not
theirs—they had moved in my side.

XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones?
I kiss'd 'em, I buried 'em all—
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night
by the churchyard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the
trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,
But I charge you never to say that I
laid him in holy ground.

XIII

They would scratch him up—they would
hang him again on the cursed tree.
Sin? O, yes, we are sinners, I know—let
all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's
good will toward men—
"Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord"
—let me hear it again;
"Full of compassion and mercy—long-
suffering." Yes, O, yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—
the Saviour lives but to bless.
He 'll never put on the black cap except
for the worst of the worst,
And the first may be last—I have heard
it in church—and the last may be
first.
Suffering—O, long-suffering—yes, as the
Lord must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind
and the shower and the snow.

XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told
you he never repented his sin.
How do they know it? are *they* his mother?
are *you* of his kin?
Heard! have you ever heard, when the
storm on the downs began,
The wind that 'ill wail like a child and
the sea that 'ill moan like a man?

XV

Election, Election, and Reprobation—it 's
all very well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall
not find him in hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the
Lord has look'd into my care,
And He means me I 'm sure to be happy
with Willy, I know not where.

XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul,
that is all your desire—
Do you think that I care for *my* soul if
my boy be gone to the fire?
I have been with God in the dark—go,
go, you may leave me alone—
You never have borne a child—you are
just as hard as a stone.

XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that
you mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my
Willy's voice in the wind—
The snow and the sky so bright—he used
but to call in the dark,
And he calls to me now from the church
and not from the gibbet—for hark!
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is
coming—shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon 's in a cloud—Good-
night. I am going. He calls.

TO VIRGIL

[1882.]

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;
Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and
Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and
herd;

All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word!

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with
flowers;

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no
more;

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound forever of Imperial Rome—

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds her
place,

I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human race,

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

'FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE'

[1883.]

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sir-
mione row!
So they row'd, and there we landed—"O
venusta Sirmio!"
There to me thro' all the groves of olive
in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the
purple flowers grow,
Came that "Ave atque Vale" of the poet's
hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hun-
dred years ago,
"Frater Ave atque Vale"—as we wan-
der'd to and fro
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda
Lake below
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery
Sirmio!

THE ANCIENT SAGE

[1885.]

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of
Christ
From out his ancient city came a Seer
Whom one that loved, and honour'd him,
and yet
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand
A scroll of verse—till that old man before
A cavern whence an affluent fountain
pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and
spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
 From yon dark cave, but, son, the source
 is higher,
 Yon summit half-a-league in air—and
 higher,
 The cloud that hides it—higher still, the
 heavens
 Whereby the cloud was moulded, and
 whereout
 The cloud descended. Force is from the
 heights.
 I am wearied of our city, son, and go
 To spend my one last year among the hills.
 What hast thou there? Some deathsong
 for the Ghouls
 To make their banquet relish? let me read.

"How far thro' all the bloom and brake
 That nightingale is heard!
 What power but the bird's could make
 This music in the bird?
 How summer-bright are yonder skies,
 And earth as fair in hue!
 And yet what sign of aught that lies
 Behind the green and blue?
 But man to-day is fancy's fool
 As man hath ever been.
 The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
 Were never heard or seen."

If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and
 wilt dive
 Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
 There, brooding by the central altar, thou
 May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a
 voice,
 By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
 As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not
 know;
 For Knowledge is the swallow on the
 lake
 That sees and stirs the surface-shadow
 there
 But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
 The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
 The blue of sky and sea, the green of
 earth,
 And in the million-millionth of a grain
 Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
 And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
 To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
 Or even than the Nameless is to me.
 And when thou sendest thy free soul thro'
 heaven,
 Nor understandest bound nor boundless-
 ness,
 Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred
 names.
 And if the Nameless should withdraw
 from all
 Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
 Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

"And since—from when this earth began—
 The Nameless never came
 Among us, never spake with man,
 And never named the Name"—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O
 my son,
 Nor canst thou prove the world thou mov-
 est in,
 Thou canst not prove that thou art body
 alone,
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit
 alone,
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in
 one:
 Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
 Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,
 Thou canst not prove that I, who speak
 with thee,
 Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
 For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
 Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be
 wise,
 Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
 And cling to Faith beyond the forms of
 Faith!
 She reels not in the storm of warring
 words,
 She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and
 'No,'
 She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the
 Worst,
 She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
 She spies the summer thro' the winter
 bud,
 She tastes the fruit before the blossom
 falls,
 She hears the lark within the songless
 egg,
 She finds the fountain where they wail'd
 'Mirage'!

"What Power? aught akin to Mind,
 The mind in me and you?
 Or power as of the Gods gone blind
 Who see not what they do?"
 But some in yonder city hold, my son,
 That none but Gods could build this house
 of ours,
 So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
 All work of man, yet, like all work of
 man,
 A beauty with defect—till That which
 knows,
 And is not known, but felt thro' what we
 feel
 Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
 On this half-deed, and shape it at the
 last
 According to the Highest in the Highest.

"What Power but the Years that make
 And break the vase of clay,
 And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
 The bloom that fades away?"

"What rules but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?"

The days and hours are ever glancing by,
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and
shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or
Pain;
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor
Hour;

Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from
thought to thought,
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal
Now:

This double seeming of the single world!—
My words are like the babblings in a
dream

Of nightmare, when the babblings break
the dream.

But thou be wise in this dream-world of
ours,

Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy
will.

"The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would
dare

Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air
Would loose him from his hold;
His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow
life

Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile."

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the
past

Is feebler than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas;

The warrior hath forgot his arms,
The Learned all his lore;
The changing market frets or charms
The merchant's hope no more;

The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
And now is lost in cloud;
The plowman passes, bent with pain,
To mix with what he plow'd;
The poet whom his Age would quote
As heir of endless fame—
He knows not ev'n the book he wrote.
Not even his own name.
For man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can
fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
Had set the lily and rose

By all my ways where'er they ran,
Have ended mortal foes;
My rose of love for ever gone,
My lily of truth and trust—
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.

O rosetree planted in my grief,
And growing, on her tomb,
Her dust is greenening in your leaf,
Her blood is in your bloom.

O slender lily waving there,
And laughing back the light,
In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'
When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and
graves,

So dark that men cry out against the
Heavens.

Who knows but that the darkness is in
man?

The doors of Night may be the gates of
Light;

For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and
then

Suddenly heal'd, how wouldst thou glory
in all

The splendours and the voices of the
world!

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and
yet

No phantoms, watching from a phantom
shore

Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade.

And show us that the world is wholly
fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
As laughter over wine,

And vain the laughter as the tears,
O brother, mine or thine,

"For all that laugh, and all that weep,
And all that breathe are one

Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the
deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my
son —

But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the
heavens

Her shadow crown'd with stars — and
yonder — out

To northward — some that never set, but
pass

From sight and night to lose themselves
in day.

I hate the black negation of the bier,
And wish the dead, as happier than our-
selves

And higher, having climb'd one step beyond
Our village miseries, might be borne in
white

To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence
With songs in praise of death, and crown'd
with flowers!

"O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings!"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of
man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I
call'd,

Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrased 'The Passion of the
Past.'

The first gray streak of earliest summer-
dawn,

The last long stripe of waning crimson
gloom,

As if the late and early were but one —
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a
flower

Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and
gone!'

A breath, a whisper — some divine fare-
well —

Desolate sweetness — far and far away —
What had he loved, what had he lost, the
boy?

I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more, my son! for more than once
when I

Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,

The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs,
the limbs

Were strange not mine — and yet no shade
of doubt,

But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd
with ours

Were Sun to spark — unshadowable in
words,

Themselves but shadows of a shadow-
world.

"And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain;"

The clouds themselves are children of the
Sun.

"And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign."

And Day and Night are children of the
Sun,

And idle gleams to thee are light to me.

Some say, the Light was father of the
Night,

And some, the Night was father of the
Light,

No night no day! — I touch thy world
again —

No ill no good! such counter-terms, my
son,

Are border-races, holding, each its own
By endless war: but night enough is there
In yon dark city: get thee back: and
since

The key to that weird casket, which for
thee

But holds a skull, is neither thine nor
mine,

But in the hand of what is more than
man,

Or in man's hand when man is more than
man,

Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,

And fling free alms into the beggar's
bowl,

And send the day into the darken'd heart;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,

A dying echo from a falling wall;
Nor care — for Hunger hath the Evil eye —

To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous
looms;

Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied
wine;

Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;

Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for
harm,

Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wanton-
ness;
And more — think well! Do-well will fol-
low thought.
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's
blood;
But curb the beast would cast thee in the
mire.
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
A cloud between the Nameless and thy-
self,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence,
if thou
Look higher, then — perchance — thou may-
est — beyond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow —
see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mor-
tal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!
So, farewell.

VASTNESS

[1889.]

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe sighs
after many a vanish'd face,
Many a planet by many a sun may roll
with the dust of a vanish'd race.
Raving politics, never at rest — as this
poor earth's pale history runs. —
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the
gleam of a million million of suns?
Lies upon this side, lies upon that side,
truthless violence mourn'd by the wise,
Thousands of voices drowning his own in
a popular torrent of lies upon lies:
Stately purposes, valour in battle, glorious
annals of army and fleet,
Death for the right cause, death for the
wrong cause, trumpets of victory,
groans of defeat;
Innocence seethed in her mother's milk,
and Charity setting the martyr aflame;
Thralldom who walks with the banner of
Freedom, and recks not to ruin a
realm in her name.
Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the
gloom of doubts that darken the
schools;
Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand,
follow'd up by her vassal legion of
fools;
Trade flying over a thousand seas with her
spice and her vintage, her silk and her
corn;
Desolate offing, sailorless harbours, famish-
ing populace, wharves forlorn:

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise;
gloom of the evening, Life at a close;
Pleasure who flaunts on her wide down-
way with her flying robe and her
poison'd rose;

Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of
Pleasure, a worm which writhes all
day, and at night
Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper,
and stings him back to the curse of
the light;

Wealth with his wines and his wedded har-
lots; honest Poverty, bare to the bone;
Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty; Flat-
tery gilding the rift in a throne;

Fame blowing out from her golden trumpet
a jubilant challenge to Time and to
Fate;

Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on
all the laurel'd graves of the Great;

Love for the maiden, crown'd with mar-
riage, no regrets for aught that has
been,

Household happiness, gracious children,
debtless competence, golden mean;

National hatreds of whole generations, and
pigmy spites of the village spire;

Vows that will last to the last death-ruckle,
and vows that are snapt in a moment
of fire;

He that has lived for the lust of the min-
ute, and died in the doing it, flesh with-
out mind;

He that has nail'd all the flesh to the Cross,
till Self died out in the love of his
kind;

Spring and Summer and Autumn and
Winter, and all these old revolutions
of earth;

All new-old revolutions of Empire—change
of the tide—what is all of it worth?

What the philosophies, all the sciences,
poesy, varying voices of prayer,
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all
that is filthy with all that is fair?

What is it all, if we all of us end but in
being our own corpse-coffins at last?
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence,
drown'd in the deeps of a meaning-
less Past?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom,
or a moment's anger of bees in their
hive? —

Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love
him for ever: the dead are not dead
but alive.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

[1889.]

I

O YOUNG Mariner,
 You from the haven
 Under the sea-cliff,
 You that are watching
 The gray Magician
 With eyes of wonder,
 I am Merlin,
 And I am dying,
 I am Merlin
 Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard
 Who found me at sunrise
 Sleeping and woke me
 And learn'd me Magic!
 Great the Master,
 And sweet the Magic,
 When over the valley,
 In early summers,
 Over the mountain,
 On human faces,
 And all around me,
 Moving to melody,
 Floated The Gleam.

III

Once at the croak of a Raven who
 crossed it,
 A barbarous people,
 Blind to the magic,
 And deaf to the melody,
 Snarl'd at and cursed me.
 A demon vexed me,
 The light retreated,
 The landskip darken'd,
 The melody deaden'd,
 The Master whisper'd,
 'Follow The Gleam.'

IV

Then to the melody,
 Over a wilderness
 Gliding, and glancing at
 Elf of the woodland,
 Gnome of the cavern,
 Griffin and Giant,
 And dancing of Fairies
 In desolate hollows,
 And wraiths of the mountain,
 And rolling of dragons
 By warble of water,
 Or cataract music
 Of falling torrents,
 Flitted The Gleam.

V

Down from the mountain
 And over the level,
 And streaming and shining on
 Silent river.

Silvery willow,
 Pasture and plowland,
 Innocent maidens,
 Garrulous children,
 Homestead and harvest,
 Reaper and gleaner,
 And rough-ruddy faces
 Of lowly labor,
 Slided The Gleam—

VI

Then, with a melody
 Stronger and statelier,
 Led me at length
 To the city and palace
 Of Arthur the king;
 Touch'd at the golden
 Cross of the churches,
 Flash'd on the Tournament,
 Flicker'd and bicker'd
 From helmet to helmet,
 And last on the forehead
 Of Arthur the blameless
 Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness
 Closed upon Camelot;
 Arthur had vanish'd
 I knew not whither,
 The king who loved me,
 And cannot die:
 For out of the darkness
 Silent and slowly
 The Gleam that had waned to a win-
 try glimmer
 On icy fallow
 And faded forest,
 Drew to the valley
 Named of the shadow,
 And slowly brightening
 Out of the glimmer,
 And slowly moving again to a
 melody

Yearningly tender,
 Fell on the shadow,
 No longer a shadow,
 But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII

And broader and brighter
 The Gleam flying onward,
 Wed to the melody,
 Sang thro' the world;
 And slower and fainter,
 Old and weary,
 But eager to follow,
 I saw, whenever
 In passing it glanced upon
 Hamlet or city,
 That under the Crosses
 The dead man's garden,
 The mortal hillock,
 Would break into blossom;

And so to the land's
 Last limit I came —
 And can no longer,
 But die rejoicing,
 For thro' the Magic
 Of Him the Mighty,
 Who taught me in childhood,
 There on the border
 Of boundless Ocean,
 And all but in Heaven
 Hovers The Gleam.

IX

Not of the sunlight,
 Not of the moonlight,
 Not of the starlight!
 O young Mariner,
 Down to the haven,
 Call your companions,
 Launch your vessel
 And crowd your canvas,
 And, ere it vanishes
 Over the margin,
 After it, follow it,
 Follow The Gleam.

FAR — FAR — AWAY

(FOR MUSIC)

[1889.]

What sight so lured him thro' the fields
 he knew
 As where earth's green stole into heaven's
 own hue,

Far — far — away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
 The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells
 Far — far — away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain
 or joy,
 Thro' those three words would haunt him
 when a boy,

Far — far — away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
 From some fair dawn beyond the doors of
 death

Far — far — away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of
 birth,

The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
 Far — far — away?

What charm in the words, a charm no
 words could give?
 O dying words; can Music make you live
 Far — far — away?

THE OAK

[1889.]

Live thy Life,
 Young and old,
 Like yon oak,
 Bright in spring,
 Living gold;

Summer-rich
 Then; and then
 Autumn-changed,
 Soberer-hued
 Gold again.

All his leaves
 Fallen at length,
 Look, he stands,
 Trunk and bough,
 Naked strength.

CROSSING THE BAR

[1889.]

SUNSET and evening star,
 And one clear call for me!
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,
 When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
 Too full for sound and foam,
 When that which drew from out the bound-
 less deep
 Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
 And after that the dark!
 And may there be no sadness of farewell,
 When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and
 Place
 The flood may bear me far,
 I hope to see my Pilot face to face
 When I have crossed the bar.

ROBERT BROWNING

(1812-1889)

SONG FROM PARACELSUS

[1835.]

OVER the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,

A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawn'd, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich
scent,

And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the dark-
ness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared — a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check

The shout, restrain the eager eye!"
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbor thus,

With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!

"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
Our temple-gates are opened wide,

Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
For these majestic forms" — they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:

Yet we called out — "Depart!
Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
Our work is done; we have no heart
To mar our work," — we cried.

CAVALIER TUNES*

[1842.]

I. MARCHING ALONG

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest
folk droop,

Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such
carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their trea-
sonous parles!

Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're —

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song.*

* The poems taken from the *Dramatic Lyrics*, *Dramatic Romances*, and *Men and Women*, follow Browning's final arrangement, which represents a redistribution subsequent to their original publication. This accounts for the irregularities in chronology.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry
as well!

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song?*

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and
his snarls

To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent
carles!

Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the
fight,

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song!*

II. GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who'll do him right
now?

King Charles, and who's ripe for fight
now?

Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do
him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe
for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's
despite now,
King Charles!*

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh e'se,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do
him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe
for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's
despite now,
King Charles!*

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away!*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many 's the friend there, will listen and
pray

'God's luck to gallants that strike up the
lay—

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away!*

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads'
array.

Who laughs, 'Good fellows ere this, by my
fay,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away!*

IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and
gay,

Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
'Nay!

I've better counsellors; what counsel they?

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away!*

THE LOST LEADER

[1845.]

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft
us,

Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him
out silver,

So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his
service!

Rags—were they purple, his heart had
been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed him,
honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear
accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they
watch from their graves!

He alone breaks from the van and the
freemen,

He alone sinks to the rear and the
slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his
presence;

Songs may inspirit us,—not from his
lyre;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his
quiescence,

Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade
aspire:

Blot out his name, then, record one lost
 soul more,
 One task more declined, one more foot-
 path untrod,
 One more triumph for devils and sorrow
 for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult
 to God!
 Life's night begins: let him never come
 back to us!
 There would be doubt, hesitation and
 pain,
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer
 of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again!
 Best fight on well, for we taught him,—
 strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his
 own;
 Then let him receive the new knowledge
 and wait us,
 Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the
 throne!

'HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD
 NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX'

[16—]

[1845.]

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all
 three;
 'Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-
 bolts undrew;
 'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping
 through;
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to
 rest,
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.
 Not a word to each other; we kept the
 great pace
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never chang-
 ing our place;
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths
 tight,
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the
 pique right,
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained 'slacker
 the bit,
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.
 'Twas moonset at starting; but while we
 drew near
 Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight
 dawned clear;
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out to
 see;
 At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as
 could be;
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we
 heard the half-chime,
 So Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there
 is time!'

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the
 sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black
 every one,
 To stare thro' the mist at us galloping
 past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at
 last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting
 away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its
 spray:

And his low head and crest, just one sharp
 ear bent back
 For my voice, and the other pricked out
 on his track;
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that
 glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master,
 askance!
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which ay
 and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping
 on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried
 Joris, 'Stay spur!
 Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's
 not in her,
 We'll remember at Aix'—for one heard
 the quick wheeze
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and
 staggering knees,
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the
 flank,
 As down on her haunches she shuddered
 and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in
 the sky;
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless
 laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright
 stubble like chaff;
 Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang
 white,
 And 'Gallop,' gasped Joris, 'for Aix is in
 sight!'

'How they'll greet us!'—and all in a mo-
 ment his roan
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a
 stone;
 And there was my Roland to bear the
 whole weight
 Of the news which alone could save Aix
 from her fate,
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood
 to the brim,
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets'
 rim.

*Two horses gain out. & the
 last, Roland, dies in reaching
 Aix.*

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster
 let fall,
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt
 and all,
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his
 ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse
 without peer;
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any
 noise, bad or good,
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped
 and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking
 round
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on
 the ground;
 And no voice but was praising this Roland
 of mine,
 As I poured down his throat our last meas-
 ure of wine,
 Which (the burgesses voted by common
 consent)
 Was no more than his due who brought
 good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD- EL-KADR

[1842.]

As I ride, as I ride,
 With a full heart for my guide,
 So its tide rocks my side,
 As I ride, as I ride,
 That, as I were double-eyed,
 He, in whom our Tribes confide,
 Is descried, ways untried
 As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride
 To our Chief and his Allied,
 Who dares chide my heart's pride
 As I ride, as I ride?
 Or are witnesses denied —
 Through the desert waste and wide
 Do I glide unspied
 As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,
 When an inner voice has cried,
 The sands slide, nor abide
 (As I ride, as I ride)
 O'er each visioned homicide
 That came vaunting (has he lied?)
 To reside — where he died,
 As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
 Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
 Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
 As I ride, as I ride,
 Shows where sweat has sprung and
 dried,
 — Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed —
 How has vied stride with stride
 As I ride, as I ride!

As I ride, as I ride,
 Could I loose what Fate has tied,
 Ere I pried, she should hide
 (As I ride, as I ride)
 All that's meant me — satisfied
 When the Prophet and the Bride
 Stop veins I'd have subside
 As I ride, as I ride!

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

[Published in *Hood's Magazine*, 1844. — Reprinted
 1845.]

PLAGUE take all your pedants, say I!
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
 Centuries back was so good as to die,
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
 This, that was a book in its time,
 Printed on paper and bound in leather,
 Last month in the white of a matin-prime
 Just when the birds sang all together,

Into the garden I brought it to read,
 And under the arbut and laurustine
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,
 From title-page to closing line.
 Chapter on chapter did I count,
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
 Added up the mortal amount;
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
 An owl would build in, were he but sage;
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
 In a castle of the Middle Age,
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
 When he'd be private, there might he
 spend

Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
 — I knew at the bottom rain-drippings
 stagnate;

Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's mag-
 nate;

Then I went indoors, brought out a loaf,
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
 A spider had spun his web across,
 And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
 And, *de profundis, accentibus laetis*,
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it; dry in the sun,
 With all the binding all of a blister,
 And great blue spots where the ink has
 run,
 And reddish streaks that wink and glister

O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
Oh, well have the droppings played their
tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this
fellow?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all
over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of
trover?
When the water beetle with great blind
deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of
the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's
closet?

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coup-
ling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were
swamping
And clasps were cracking and covers
suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or
Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers
and tunic.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough
is it?
Back to my room shall you take your
sweet self!
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *suf-
ficit!*
See the snug niche I have made on my
shelf.
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover
you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be
gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right
over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

[1842.]

GR-R-R — there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims —
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
*Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for 'parsley'?*
What's the Greek name for Swine's
Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps —
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank,
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
— Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary's corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As I do, in Jesu's praise.
I, the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp —
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp!

Oh, those melons! If he 's able
We're to have a feast; so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange! — And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of Heaven as sure as can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to Hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Open a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there 's Satan! — one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the indenture
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! *Hj, Zj, Hine . . .*
 'St, there 's Vespers! *Plena gratia*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r — you swine!

THE LABORATORY

[ANCIEN REGIME]

[Published in *Hood's Magazine*, 1844. Reprinted
 1845.]

Now THAT I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling
 whitely,
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-
 smithy —
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?
 He is with her; and they know that I know
 Where they are, what they do: they believe
 my tears flow
 While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled
 to the drear
 Empty church, to pray God in, for them! —
 I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
 Pound at thy powder, — I am not in haste!
 Better sit thus, and observe thy strange
 things,
 Than go where men wait me and dance at
 the King's.

That in the mortar — you call it a gum?
 Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings
 come!
 And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
 Sure to taste sweetly, — is that poison too?

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treas-
 ures,
 What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
 To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
 A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
 And Pauline should have just thirty min-
 utes to live!
 But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her
 head
 And her breast and her arms and her
 hands, should drop dead!

Quick — is it finished? The colour 's too
 grim!
 Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and
 dim?
 Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it
 and stir,
 And try it and taste, ere she fix and
 prefer!

What a drop! She 's not little, no minion
 like me —
 That 's why she ensnared him: this never
 will free
 The soul from those masculine eyes, —
 say, 'no!
 To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I
 brought
 My own eyes to bear on her so, that I
 thought
 Could I keep them one half minute fixed,
 she would fall,
 Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it
 all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
 Let death be felt and the proof remain;
 Brand, burn up, bite into its grace —
 He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be
 not morose;
 It kills her, and this prevents seeing it
 close:
 The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's
 fee —
 If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to
 your fill,
 You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth
 if you will!
 But brush this dust off me, lest horror it
 brings
 Ere I know it — next moment I dance at
 the King's!

CRISTINA

[1842.]

SHE should never have looked at me
 If she meant I should not love her!
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
 I suppose . . . she may discover
 All her soul to, if she pleases,
 And yet leave much as she found them:
 But I'm not so, and she knew it
 When she fixed me, glancing round them

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
 But I can't tell (there's my weakness)
 What her look said! — no vile cant, sure,
 About 'need to strew the bleakness
 Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
 That the sea feels' — no 'strange yearn-
 ing
 That such souls have, most to lavish
 Where there's chance of least returning!

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
 But not quite so sunk that moments,
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
 When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And appraise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstified
Seems the sole work of a lifetime
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it)
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear but there's provision
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
— Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended;
And then, come the next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

[1845.]

ALL's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
— You know the red turns grey.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dear-
est?

May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the
merest

Keep much that I resign:

For each glance of that eye so bright and
black,

Though I keep with heart's endeavour, —
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops
back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever! —

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all
may,
Or so very little longer!

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

[1845.]

FAME

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its
prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the
sods
Have struggled through its binding osier-
rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean
awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by and
by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er
plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name
and date!

LOVE

So, the year's done with!
(*Love me for ever!*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever —
(*Love me for ever!*)

MEETING AT NIGHT

[1845.]

THE grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,
 And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and
 fears,
 Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING

[1845.]

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
 And the sun looked over the mountain's
 rim:
 And straight was a path of gold for him,
 And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG

[1845.]

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above
 her?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
 To praise, you search the wide world
 over:
 So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—
 above her?
 Above this tress, and this I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

[1855.]

LET's contend no more, Love,
 Strive nor weep:
 All be as before, Love,
 —Only sleep!

What so wild as words are?
 I and thou
 In debate, as birds are,
 Hawk on bough!

See the creature stalking
 While we speak!
 Hush and hide the talking,
 Cheek on cheek!

What so false as truth is,
 False to thee?
 Where the serpent's tooth is,
 Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens
 Never pry—
 Lest we lose our Edens,
 Eve and I!

Be a god and hold me
 With a charm!
 Be a man and fold me
 With thine arm!

Teach me, only teach, Love!
 As I ought
 I will speak thy speech, Love,
 Think thy thought—

Meet, if thou require it,
 Both demands,
 Laying flesh and spirit
 In thy hands.

That shall be to-morrow,
 Not to-night:
 I must bury sorrow
 Out of sight:

—Must a little weep, Love,
 (Foolish me!)
 And so fall asleep, Love,
 Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE

[1855.]

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
 She plucked that piece of geranium-
 flower,
 Beginning to die too, in the glass;
 Little has yet been changed, I think:
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass
 Save two long rays thro' the hinge's
 chink.

Sixteen years old when she died!
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
 It was not her time to love; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
 What, your soul was pure and true,
 The good stars met in your horoscope,
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
 And, just because I was thrice as old
 And our paths in the world diverged so
 wide,
 Each was nought to each, must I be told?
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

No, indeed! for God above
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love:
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a
 few:
 Much is to learn and much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall
 say,
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,
 That body and soul so pure and gay?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's
 red—
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's
 stead.
 have lived, I shall say, so much since
 then,
 Given up myself so many times,
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
 Let one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
 Either I missed or itself missed me:
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
 What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
 My heart seemed full as it could hold—
 here was place and to spare for the
 frank young smile
 And the red young mouth and the hair's
 young gold.
 O, hush,—I will give you this leaf to
 keep—
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
 here, that is our secret! go to sleep;
 You will wake, and remember, and un-
 derstand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

[1855.]

HERE the quiet-coloured end of evening
 smiles,
 Miles and miles
 In the solitary pastures where our sheep
 Half-asleep
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray
 or stop
 As they crop—
 Was the site once of a city great and gay,
 (So they say)
 Of our country's very capital, its prince
 Ages since
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wield-
 ing far
 Peace or war.

Now—the country does not even boast a
 tree,
 As you see,
 No distinguishing slopes of verdure, certain
 rills
 From the hills
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one)
 Where the domed and daring palace shot
 its spires
 Up like fires

O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
 Made of marble, men might march on nor
 be prest,
 Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of
 grass
 Never was!
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-
 spreads

And embeds
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and
 woe

Long ago;
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up,
 dread of shame
 Struck them tame;
 And that glory and that shame alike, the
 gold

Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,

By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head of
 blossom winks

Through the chinks—
 Marks the basement whence a tower in
 ancient time

Sprang sublime,
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots
 traced

As they raced,
 And the monarch and his minions and his
 dames

Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured
 eve

Smiles to leave
 To their folding, all our many-tinkling
 fleece

In such peace,
 And the slopes and rills in undistinguished
 grey

Melt away—
 That a girl with eager eyes and yellow
 hair

Waits me there
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught
 soul

For the goal,
 When the king looked, where she looks
 now, breathless, dumb
 Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
 All the mountains topped with temples,
 all the glades'
 Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, — and then,

All the men!

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,

Either hand

On' my shoulder, 'give her eyes the first embrace

Of my face,

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech

Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth

South and North,

And they built their gods a brazen pillar high

As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force —

Gold, of course.

Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!

Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!

Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.

Love is best!

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

[AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY]

[1855.]

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,

The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;

Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;

While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull

Just on a mountain-edge 'as bare as the creature's skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!

— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses! Why?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;

Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;

And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,

'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,

And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;

In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell

Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!

In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash

Round the lady atop in the conch — fifty gazers do not abash,

Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash!

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though you linger,

Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and mingle,

Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.

Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

IX

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the
blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off, than the
diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs
you never a pin.
By and by there 's the travelling doctor
gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the
market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the
new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three
liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the archbishop's most fath-
erly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion,
some little new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the
Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint
Jerome, and Cicero,
And moreover,' (the sonnet goes rhyming,)
'the skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent lec-
tures more unctuous than ever he
preached.'
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession!
Our Lady borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and
seven words stuck in her heart!
Bang, whang, whang goes the drum, *tootle-
te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it 's the
greatest pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it 's dear — it 's dear! fowls,
wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt,
and what oil pays passing the gate
It 's a horror to think of. And so, the
villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still
—ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the
monks with cows and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts,
a-holding the yellow candles:
One, he carries a flag up straight, and an-
other a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear,
for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang, whang, whang goes the drum, *tootle-
te-tootle* the fife;
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no
such pleasure in life!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

[1855.]

OH, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad
to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would
prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with
such a heavy mind!

Here you come with your old music, and
here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where
the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used
to wed the sea with rings?

Aye, because the sea's the street there; and
'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,
where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England — it's as if
I saw it all!

Did young people take their pleasure when
the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burn-
ing ever to mid-day
When they made up fresh adventures for
the morrow, do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round
and lips so red, —
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a
bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where
a man might base his head?

Well, (and it was graceful of them) they'd
break talk off and afford
— She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he,
to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately
at the clavichord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,
sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions,
those solutions — 'Must we die?'
Those commiserating sevenths — 'Life
might last! we can but try!'

'Were you happy?' — 'Yes.' — 'And are you
still as happy?' — 'Yes. And you?'
— 'Then, more kisses!' — 'Did I stop them,
when a million seemed so few?'
Hark! the dominant's persistence, till it
must be answered to!

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they
praised you, I dare say!
'Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike
at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking, when I hear
a master play.'

Then they left you for their pleasure: till
in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some
with deeds as well undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where
they never see the sun.

But when I sit down to reason, think to
take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from
nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music, till I
creep thro' every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking
where a house was burned—
'Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Ven-
ice spent what Venice earned!
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a
soul can be discerned.

'Yours for instance, you know physics,
something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall
rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll
not die, it cannot be!

As for Venice and its people, merely born
to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage,
mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when
the kissing had to stop?

'Dust and ashes!' So you creak it, and I
want the heart to scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too—
what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I
feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

[1855.]

I

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they
say:

As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath where, white and
wide

And washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you
so?

Some slights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows
know!

I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf which they never
shed)

'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like
moons,

Who hinged in Florence, besides her
men.

V

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick
pains!

One, wishful each scrap should clutch the
brick,

Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient
Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in Heaven with their backs
to it,

The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and
buzz

Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old
scope,

Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reckon of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls—can they
be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,

Where you style them, you of the little
 wit,
 Old Master This and Early the Other,
 Not dreaming that Old and New are
 fellows:
 A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
 Da Vincis derive in good time from
 Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield
 returns,
 And a handsome word or two give help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff grins
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there,
 Of brow once prominent and starry,
 Called Nature's Ape and the world's de-
 spair
 For his peerless painting? (see Vasari.)

X

There stands the Master. Study, my
 friends,
 What a man's work comes to! so he
 plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and then,
sic transit!
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the hand is
 busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their
 neighbour!
 'Tis looking downward that makes one
 dizzy.

XI

'If you knew their work you would deal
 your dole.'
 May I take upon me to instruct you?
 When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
 Thus much had the world to boast in
fructu—
 The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
 Which the actual generations garble,
 Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs
 betoken)
 And Limbs (Soul informs) made new
 in marble.

XII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you
 were,
 As you might have been, as you cannot
 be;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
 And grew content in your poor degree,
 With your little power, by those statues'
 godhead,
 And your little scope, by their eyes' full
 sway,
 And your little grace, by their grace em-
 bodied,
 And your little date, by their forms that
 stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
 You'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam
 Has yet the advantage in arms' and
 knees' use.
 You're wroth—can you slay your snake
 like Apollo?
 You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!
 You live—there's the Racers' frieze to fol-
 low:
 You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
 Your meagre charms by their rounded
 beauty,
 Measured by Art in your breadth and
 length,
 You learned—to submit is a mortal's
 duty.
 —When I say 'you' 'tis the common soul,
 The collective, I mean: the race of Man
 That receives life in parts to live in a
 whole,
 And grow here according to God's clear
 plan.

XV

Growth came when, looking your last on
 them all,
 You turned your eyes inwardly one fine
 day
 And cried with a start—What if we so
 small
 Be greater and grander the while than
 they!
 Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of
 stature?
 In both, of such lower types are we
 Precisely because of our wider nature;
 For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

XVI

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
 It seethes with the morrow for us and
 more.
 They are perfect—how else? they shall
 never change;
 We are faulty—why not? we have time
 in store.
 The Artificer's hand is not arrested
 With us—we are rough-hewn, nowise
 polished:
 They stand for our copy, and, once in-
 vested
 With all they can teach, we shall see
 them abolished.

XVII

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
 The better! what's come to perfection
 perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall practise
in Heaven.

Works done least rapidly, Art most cher-
ishes.

Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!

Thy one work, not to decrease or dimin-
ish,

Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?)
'O!'

Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII

Is it true that we are now, and shall be
hereafter,

But what and where depend on life's
minute?

Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter

Our first step out of the gulf or in it?

Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,

Man's face, have no more play and action

Than joy which is crystallized for ever,

Or grief, an eternal petrification?

XIX

On which I conclude, that the early paint-
ers,

To cries of 'Greek Art and what more
wish you?'—

Replied, 'To become now self-acquainters,

And paint man, man, whatever the issue!

Make new hopes shine through the flesh
they fray,

New fears aggrandize the rags and tat-
ters:

To bring the invisible full into play!

Let the visible go to the dogs—what
matters?'—

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and
glory

For daring so much, before they well did
it.

The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle
quiddit.

The worthies began a revolution,

Which if on earth you intend to acknowl-
edge,

Why, honour them now (ends my allocu-
tion)

Nor confer your degree when the fo'ks
leave college.

XXI

There's a fancy some lean to and others
hate—

That, when this life is ended, begins

New work for the soul in another state,

Where it strives and gets weary, loses
and wins;

Where the strong and the weak, this world's
congeries,

Repeat in large what they practised in
small,

Through life after life in unlimited series;

Only the scale 's to be changed, that's all.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And through earth and its noise, what is
Heaven's serene,—

When its faith in the same has stood the
test—

Why, the child grown man, you burn the
rod,

The uses of labour are surely done:

There remaineth a rest for the people of
God,

And I have had troubles enough for one.

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season

Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,

My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,

And painter—who but Cimabue?

Nor ever was man of them all indeed,

From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,

Could say that he missed my critic-meed.

So now to my special grievance—height
ho!

XXIV

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,

Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,

Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed
o'er

—No getting again what the church has
grasped!

The works on the wall must take their
chance;

'Works never conceded to England's
thick clime!'

(I hope they prefer their inheritance

Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a shak-
ing

Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly

Each master his way through the black
streets taking,

Where many a lost work breathes though
badly—

Why don't they bethink them of who has
merited?

Why not reveal, while their pictures dree

Such doom, that a captive 's to be out-
ferreted?

Why is it they never remember me?

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi

Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, belli-
cose;

Nor the wronged Lippino; and not a word
I

Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's:

But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,

To grant me a taste of your intonaco—

Some Jerome that seeks the Heaven with a
sad eye?

Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
 Save me a sample, give me the hap
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the
 draughtsman?
 No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
 Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
 With the grave-clothes garb and swad-
 dling barret,
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
 You bald, old, saturnine, poll-clawed
 parrot?)
 Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
 Where in the foreground kneels the
 donor?
 If such remain, as is my conviction,
 The hoarding it does you but little
 honour.

XXIX

They pass: for them the panels may thrill,
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish—
 Their pictures are left to the mercies still
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the
 English,
 Who, seeing mere money's worth in their
 prize,
 Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
 At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
 Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino!

XXX

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
 Have you allowed, as the town-tongues
 babble it,—
 Oh, never! it shall not be counted true—
 That a certain precious little tablet
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover.—
 Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
 And, left for another than I to discover,
 Turns up at last! and to whom?—to
 whom?

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
 Patient on altar-steps planting a weary
 toe!
 Nay, I shall have it yet! *detur amanti!*
 My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
 Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's
 eye!
 So, in anticipative gratitude,
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain
 dotard
 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,

To the worse side of the Mont Saint
 Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
 None of that shooting the sky (blank
 cartridge),
 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we'll shoot better game and bag
 'em hot—
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 (Ex: 'Casa Guidi,' *quod videas ante*)
 Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to
 Florence,
 How Art may return that departed with
 her.
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the
 Loraine's,
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall
 perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history—
 Feel truth at blood-heat and the falsehood
 at zero rate,
 Make of the want of the age no mys-
 tery!
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 Show, monarchy ever its uncouth cub
 licks
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimaera's—
 While Pure Art's birth is still the re-
 public's!

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt
 Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an
 'issimo,')
 To end now our half-told tale of Cam-
 buscan,
 And turn the Bell-tower's *alt* to *altis-
 simo*:
 And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, un-
 baffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the
 spire
 While, 'God and the People' plain for its
 motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the
 sky?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

'DE GUSTIBUS—'

[1855.]

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)

In an English lane,

By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.

Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—

A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,

Making love, say,—

The happier they!

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,

And let them pass, as they will too soon,

With the beanflowers' boon,

And the blackbird's tune,

And May, and June!

What I love best in all the world,

Is a castle, precipice-encurled,

In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.

Or look for me, old fellow of mine,

(If I get my head from out the mouth

O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,

And come again to the land of lands)—

In a sea-side house to the farther South,

Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,

And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,

Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crusted,

My sentinel to guard the sands

To the water's edge. For, what expands

Before the house, but the great opaque

Blue breadth of sea without a break?

While, in the house, for ever crumbles

Some fragment of the frescoed walls,

From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.

A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles

Down on the pavement, green-flesh me'lons,

And says there's news to-day—the king

Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,

Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:

—She hopes they have not caught the felons.

Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me—

(When fortune's malice

Lost her, Calais)

Open my heart and you will see

Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'

Such lovers old are I and she;

So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

[1845.]

Oh, to be in England

Now that April's there,

And whoever wakes in England

Sees, some morning, unaware,

That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf

Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,

While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough

In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!

Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge

Leans to the field and scatters on the clover Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—

That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,

Lest you should think he never could re-capture

The first fine careless rapture!

And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,

All will be gay when noontide wakes anew The buttercups, the little children's dower

—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

SAUL

[The first nine stanzas, 1845. — The completed poem, 1855.]

I

SAID Abner, 'At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well!' Then wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he, 'Since the King, O my friend, fo. thy countenance sent,

Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent

Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,

Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,

Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or of praise,

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,

And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child, with His dew

On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue

Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat

Were now raging to torture the desert!

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,

And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and
under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-
patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I
groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and
was not afraid,
But spoke, 'Here is David, thy servant!'
And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness;
but soon I descried
A something more black than the black-
ness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion;
and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and
blackest of all:
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-
roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both
arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre,
that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,
as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent
all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till
deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul,
drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies
we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the
noontide—those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep
know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door, till
folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes,
for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water
within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as
star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so
blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the
cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes
the crickets elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another:
and then, what has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside
his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder,
half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them
our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are His children,
one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,
their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good
friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's
life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his
journey—'Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flow-
ers! are balm-seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left
such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!'
—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young mai-
dens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—
And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him
and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them,
our friends?—Then, the chorus in-
toned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory
enthroned.
But I stopped here—for here in the dark-
ness, Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such
silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shud-
dered—and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban
at once with a start—
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
courageous at heart.
So the head—but the 'body still moved
not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pur-
sued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! no
spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor
sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping
from rock up to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the
fir-tree,—the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—
 the hunt of the bear,
 And the sultriness showing the lion is
 couched in his lair.
 And the meal—the rich dates yellowed
 over with gold dust divine,
 And the locust's-flesh steeped in the
 pitcher! the full draught of wine,
 And the sleep in the dried river-channel!
 where bulrushes tell
 That the water was wont to go warbling
 so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living!
how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses,
for ever in joy!
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
 father, whose sword thou didst guard
 When he trusted thee forth with the armies,
 for glorious reward?
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy
 mother, held up as men sung
 The low song of the nearly-departed, and
 heard her faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness,
 "Let one more attest,
 I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life-
 time, and all was for best!"
 Then they sung thro' their tears in strong
 triumph, not much—but the rest.
 And thy brothers, the help and the contest,
 the working whence grew
 Such result as, from seething grape-bun-
 dles, the spirit strained true!
 And the friends of thy boyhood—that
 boyhood of wonder and hope,
 Present promise, and wealth of the future
 beyond the eye's scope,—
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a
 people is thine;
 And all gifts, which the world offers singly,
 on one head combine!
 On one head, all the beauty and strength,
 love and rage (like the three
 That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour
 and lets the gold go)
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it,
 fame crowning it,—all
 Brought to blaze on the head of one crea-
 ture—King Saul!

x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—
 heart, hand, harp and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow,
 each bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for—
 as when, dare I say,
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service,
 strains through its array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—
 "Saul!" cried I, and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow.
 Then Saul, who hung propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the centre,
 was struck by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy sum-
 mons goes right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to withstand
 her, that held (he alone,
 While the vale laughed in freedom and
 flowers) on a broad bust of stone
 A year's snow bound about for a breast-
 plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
 Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunder-
 ously down to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but
 alive yet, your mountain of old,
 With his rents, the successive bequeathings
 of ages untold—
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,
 each furrow and scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tem-
 pest—all hail, there they are!
 Now again to be softened with verdure,
 again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young
 to the green on its crest
 For their food in the ardours of summer!
 One long shudder thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then
 sank and was stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me,
 released and aware.
 What was gone, what remained? all to
 traverse 'twixt hope and despair;
 Death was past, life not come: so he
 waited. Awhile his right hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
 vacant forthwith to remand
 To their place what new objects should
 enter; 'twas Saul as before.
 I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes,
 nor was hurt any more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye
 watch from the shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a
 sun's slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,
 o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more in-
 tense: so, arm folded in arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings sub-
 sided.

xi

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me)
 what next should I urge
 To sustain him where song had restored
 him?—Song filled to the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing
 all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the
 beauty! Beyond, on what fields,

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect
to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend
them the cup they put by?
He saith, 'It is good'; still he drinks not:
he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own
part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife

Which had come long ago on the pastures,
when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle
wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the
world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip
'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed—'Since my days are or-
dained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the
plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with,
and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I
hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right
uses, the courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men
strive for.' And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew
surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as
thus—

XIII

'Yea, my King,'

I began—'thou dost well in rejecting mere
comforts that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common
by man and by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life,
in our soul it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,
—how its stem trembled first
Till it pass'd the kid's lip, the stag's antler;
then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou
mindedst when these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
perfect: yet more was to learn,
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-
fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sor-
row? or care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth pro-
duced them? Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place,
while the palm-wine shall stanch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I
pour thee such wine.

Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for!
the spirit be thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee,
thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious,
the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine run-
ning! each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;
until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds
spoil him, though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced
not, must everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so,
each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess,
long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people the countless, with ar-
dour, till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn,
fill the South and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the germ
of. Carouse in the Past!
But the license of age has its limit; thou
diest at last:
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the
rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty
for ever take flight.
No! again a long draught of my soul-wine!
look forth o'er the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the
actual; begin with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale
make his tomb—bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-
square, till, built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King
slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where
the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—
Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the
populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised
there! Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar,
whereon they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them)
their praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,
—the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet com-
ment. The river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each
other when prophet-winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their
due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty,
thank God that thou art!

xiv

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou
 who didst grant me that day,
 And before it not seldom hast granted Thy
 help to essay
 Carry on and complete an adventure, — my
 Shield and my Sword
 In that act where my soul was Thy servant,
 Thy word was my word, —
 Still be with me, who then at the summit
 of human endeavour
 And scaling the highest, man's thought
 could, gazed hopeless as ever
 On the new stretch of Heaven above me —
 till, mighty to save,
 Just one lift of Thy hand cleared that distance —
 God's throne from man's grave!
 Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my
 voice to my heart
 Which can scarce dare believe in what
 marvels last night I took part.
 As this morning I gather the fragments,
 alone with my sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish
 like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while
 Hebron upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his
 shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv

I say then, — my song
 While I sang thus, assuring the monarch,
 and ever more strong
 Made a proffer of good to console him —
 he slowly resumed
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The
 right hand replumed
 His black locks to their wonted composure,
 adjusted the swathes
 Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat
 that his countenance bathes,
 He wipes off with the robe; and he girds
 now his loins as of yore,
 And feels slow for the armlets of price,
 with the clasp set before.
 He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere
 error had bent
 The broad brow from the daily communion;
 and still, though much spent
 Be the life and the bearing that front you,
 the same, God did choose.
 To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,
 never quite lose.
 So sank he along by the tent-prop till,
 stayed by the pile
 Of his armour and war-cloak and garments,
 he leaned there awhile.
 And so sat out my singing, — one arm
 round the tent-prop, to raise
 His bent head, and the other hung slack —
 till I touched on the praise

I foresaw from all men in all times, to
 the man patient there;
 And thus ended, the harp falling forward.
 Then first I was 'ware
 That he sat, as I say, with my head just
 above his vast knees
 Which were thrust out on each side around
 me, like oak roots which please
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I
 looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought solace:
 he spoke not, but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he
 laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on
 my brow; thro' my hair
 The large fingers were pushed, and he bent
 back my head, with kind power —
 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men
 do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes
 that scrutinized mine —
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him!
 but where was the sign?
 I yearned — 'Could I help thee, my father,
 inventing a bliss,
 I would add to that life of the Past, both
 the Future and this;
 I would give thee new life altogether, as
 good, ages hence,
 As this moment, — had love but the war-
 rant, love's heart to dispense!"

xvi

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
 more — no song more! outbroke —

hand speaking

xvii

'I have gone the whole round of Creation:
 I saw and I spoke!
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,
 received in my brain
 And pronounced on the rest of His hand-
 work — returned Him again
 His creation's approval or censure: I spoke
 as I saw.
 I report, as a man may of God's work —
 all's love, yet all's law!
 Now I lay down the judgeship He lent me.
 Each faculty tasked
 To perceive Him, has gained an abyss,
 where a dewdrop was asked.
 Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels
 at Wisdom laid bare.
 Have I forethought? how purblind, how
 blank, to the Infinite Care!
 Do I task any faculty highest, to image
 success?
 I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no
 more and no less,
 In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and
 God is seen God
 In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in
 the soul and the clod.

And thus looking within and around me, I
 ever renew
 (With that stoop of the soul which in
 bending upraises it too)
 The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to
 God's All-Complete,
 As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb
 to His feet!
 Yet with all this abounding experience, this
 Deity known,
 I shall dare to discover some province,
 some gift of my own.
 There 's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard
 to hoodwink,
 I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I
 laugh as I think)
 Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it,
 wot ye, I worst
 E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold! I
 could love if I durst!
 But I sink the pretension as fearing a man
 may o'ertake
 God's own speed in the one way of love:
 I abstain for love's sake.
 —What, my soul? see thus far and no
 farther? when doors great and small,
 Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch,
 should the hundredth appal?
 In the least things, have faith, yet distrust
 in the greatest of all?
 Do I find love so full in my nature, God's
 ultimate gift,
 That I doubt His own love can compete
 with it? here, the parts shift?
 Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the
 end, what Began?—
 Would I fain in my impotent yearning do
 all for this man,
 And dare doubt He alone shall not help
 him, who yet alone can?
 Would it ever have entered my mind, the
 bare will, much less power,
 To bestow on this Saul what I sang of,
 the marvellous dower
 Of the life he was gifted and filled with?
 to make such a soul,
 Such a body, and then such an earth for
 insphering the whole?
 And doth it not enter my mind (as my
 warm tears attest)
 These good things being given, to go on,
 and give one more, the best?
 Aye, to save and redeem and restore him,
 maintain at the height
 This perfection,—succeed with life's day-
 spring, death's minute of night?
 Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch
 Saul, the mistake,
 Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—
 and bid him awake
 From the dream, the probation, the pre-
 lude, to find himself set

Clear and safe in new light and new life,—
 a new harmony yet
 To be run, and continued, and ended—who
 knows?—or endure!
 The man taught enough by life's dream, of
 the rest to make sure;
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning
 intensified bliss,
 And the next world's reward and repose,
 by the struggles in this.

XVIII

'I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest,
 'tis I who receive:
 In the first is the last, in Thy will is my
 power to believe.
 All's one gift: Thou canst grant it more-
 over, as prompt to my prayer
 As I breathe out this breath, as I open
 these arms to the air.
 From Thy will, stream the worlds, life and
 nature, Thy dread Sabaoth:
 I will?—the mere atoms despise me! why
 am I not loath
 To look that, even that in the face too?
 why is it I dare
 Think but lightly of such impuissance?
 what stops my despair?
 This;—'tis not what man Does which ex-
 alts him, but what man Would do!
 See the King—I would help him but can-
 not, the wishes fall through.
 Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow,
 grow poor to enrich,
 To fill up his life, starve my own out,
 I would—knowing which,
 I know that my service is perfect. Oh,
 speak through me now!
 Would I suffer for him that I love? So
 wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!
 So shall crown Thee the topmost, in-
 effablest, uttermost crown—
 And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor
 leave up nor down
 One spot for the creature to stand in! It
 is by no breath,
 Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation
 joins issue with death!
 As Thy Love is discovered almighty, al-
 mighty be proved
 Thy power, that exists with and for it, of
 being Beloved!
 He who did most, shall bear most; the
 strongest shall stand the most weak.
 'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry
 for! my flesh, that I seek
 In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O
 Saul, it shall be
 A Face like my face that receives thee;
 a Man like to me,
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever:
 a Hand like this hand
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to
 thee! See the Christ stand!'

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way
 home in the night.
 There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to
 left and to right,
 Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the
 alive, the aware—
 I repressed, I got through them as hardly,
 as strugglingly there,
 As a runner beset by the populace famished
 for news—
 Life or death. The whole earth was
 awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
 And the stars of night beat with emotion,
 and tingled and shot
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowl-
 edge: but I fainted not,
 For the Hand still impelled me at once
 and supported, suppressed
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,
 and holy behest,
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the
 earth sank to rest.
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had
 withered from earth—
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the
 day's tender birth;
 In the gathered intensity brought to the
 grey of the hills;
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in
 the sudden wind-thrills;
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off,
 each with eye sidling still
 Though averted with wonder and dread;
 in the birds stiff and chill
 That rose heavily, as I approached them,
 made stupid with awe!
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he
 felt the new Law.
 The same stared in the white humid faces
 upturned by the flowers;
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar,
 and moved the vine-bowers:
 And the little brooks witnessing murmured,
 persistent and low,
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices
 —'E'en so, it is so!

MY STAR

[1855.]

ALL that I know
 Of a certain star,
 Is, it can throw
 (Like the angled spar)
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue;
 Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,
 My star that dartles the red and the blue!
 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower,
 hangs furled:

They must solace themselves with the
 Saturn above it.
 What matter to me if their star is a world?
 Mine has opened its soul to me; there-
 fore I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

[1855.]

How well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark Autumn evenings
 come:
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb
 In life's November too!

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book as besemeth age,
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind
 blows,

And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 Not verse now, only prose!

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
 'There he is at it, deep in Greek:
 Now, then, or never, out we slip
 To cut from the hazels by the creek
 A mainmast for our ship!

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
 Greek puts already on either side
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
 And I pass out where it ends.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees—
 But the inside-archway narrows fast.
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last
 And youth, by green degrees.

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand:
 Oh, woman-country, wooed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
 Laid to their hearts instead!

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Half-way up in the Alpine gorge.
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
 Breaks solitude in vain?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
 The woods are round us, heaped and
 dim;
 From slab to slab how it slips and
 springs—
 The thread of water single and slim,
 Through the ravage some torrent brings!

Does it feed the little lake below?
 That speck of white just on its marge
 Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
 How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
 When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
 And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
 By boulder-stones where lichens mock
 The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
 Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain-
 flowers,
 And the thorny balls, each three in one,
 The chestnuts throw on our path in
 showers!
 — For the drop of the woodland fruit's
 begun,
 These early November hours,

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
 Like a splash of blood intense, abrupt,
 O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
 And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
 Elf-needed mat of moss,

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
 Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew
 Yon sudden coral nipple bulged
 Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky
 crew
 Of toadstools peep indulged.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
 That takes the turn to a range beyond,
 Is the chapel reached by the one-arched
 bridge
 Where the water is stopped in a stagnant
 pond
 Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
 Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
 See here again, how the lichens fret
 And the roots of the ivy strike!

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
 On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
 To the dozen folk from their scattered
 homes,
 Gathered within that precinct small
 By the dozen ways one roams —

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low
 shed,
 Leave the grange where the woodman
 stores his nuts,
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers
 spread
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,
 With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
 Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
 'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
 But has borne the weather's brunt —

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
 For a pent-house properly projects
 Where three carved beams make a certain
 show,
 Dating—good thought of our architect's—
 'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

And all day long a bird sings there,
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at
 times;
 The place is silent and aware;
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
 But that is its own affair.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
 Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,
 With whom beside should I dare pursue
 The path grey heads abhor?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with
 them;
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —
 Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth
 drops,
 One inch from life's safe hem!

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
 No longer watch you as you sit
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Mutely, my heart knows how —

When, if I think but deep enough,
 You are wont to answer, prompt as
 rhyme;
 And you, too, find without a rebuff
 The response your soul seeks many a
 time
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
 This path back, is it not in pride
 To think how little I dreamed it led
 To an age so blest that by its side
 Youth seems the waste instead?

My own, see where the years conduct!
 At first, 'twas something our two souls
 Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
 Into each now: on, the new stream rolls,
 Whatever rocks obstruct.

Think, when our one soul understands
 The great Word which makes all things
 new —
 When earth breaks up and Heaven ex-
 pands —
 How will the change strike me and you
 In the House not made with hands?

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
 Your heart anticipate my heart,
 You must be just before, in fine,
 See and make me see, for your part,
 New depths of the Divine!

But who could have expected this,
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss?

Come back with me to the first of all,
 Let us lean and love it over again —
 Let us now forget and now recall,
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
 And gather what we let fall!

What did I say? — that a small bird sings
 All day long, save when a brown pair
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide
 wings
 Strained to a bell; 'gainst the noonday
 glare
 You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve
 'Tis better; then the silence grows
 To that degree, you half believe
 It must get rid of what it knows,
 Its bosom does so heave.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
 And still I questioned or replied,
 While my heart, convulsed to really
 speak,
 Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
 And care about the fresco's loss,
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,
 And wonder at the moss.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under —
 Look through the window's grated
 square:
 Nothing to see! for fear of plunder,
 The cross is down and the altar bare,
 As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
 See the little porch and rustic door,
 Read duly the dead builder's date,
 Then cross the bridge we crossed before,
 Take the path again — but wait!

Oh moment, one and infinite!
 The water slips o'er stock and stone;
 The West is tender, hardly bright:
 How grey at once is the evening grown —
 One star, the chrysolite!

We two stood there with never a third,
 But each by each, as each knew well:
 The sights we saw and the sounds we
 heard,
 The lights and the shades made up a
 spell
 Till the trouble grew and stirred.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
 And the little less, and what worlds
 away!
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best
 play,
 And life be a proof of this!

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
 So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and
 her:
 I could fix her face with a guard between,
 And find her soul as when friends confer,
 Friends — lovers that might have been.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-
 time,
 Wanting to sleep now over its best.
 Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
 But bring to the last leaf no such test:
 'Hold the last fast!' runs the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,
 To gain a lover and lose a friend,
 Venture the tree and a myriad such,
 When nothing you mar but the year can
 mend!
 But a last leaf — fear to touch!

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
 Eddying down till it find your face
 At some slight wind — (best chance of all)
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-
 place
 You trembled to forestall!

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
 — That hair so dark and dear, how worth
 That a man should strive and agonize,
 And taste a very hell on earth
 For the hope of such a prize!

You might have turned and tried a man,
 Set him a space to weary and wear,
 And prove which suited more your plan,
 His best of hope or his worst despair,
 Yet end as he began.

But you spared me this, like the heart you
 are,
 And filled my empty heart at a word.
 If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,
 They are one and one, with a shadowy
 third;
 One near one is too far.

A moment after, and hands unseen
 Were hanging the night around us fast;
 But we knew that a bar was broken be-
 tween
 Life and life: we were mixed at last
 In spite of the mortal screen.

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a second the powers at play:

They had mingled us so, for once and for good,

Their work was done—we might go or stay,

They relapsed to their ancient mood.

How the world is made for each of us!

How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,

When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit—the thing it does!

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,

It forwards the general deed of man,

And each of the Many helps to recruit

The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

I am named and known by that moment's feat;

There took my station and degree:

So grew my own small life complete,

As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now

Back again, as you mutely sit

Musing by fire-light, that great brow

Yonder, the spirit-small hand propping it

Yonder, my heart knows how!

So, the earth has gained by one man more,

And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too;

And the whole is well worth thinking o'er

When the autumn comes: which I mean to do

One day, as I said before.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

[1855.]

I WONDER do you feel to-day

As I have felt, since, hand in hand,

We sat down on the grass, to stray

In spirit better through the land,

This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,

Has tantalized me many times,

(Like turns of thread the spiders throw

Mocking across' our path) for rhymes

To catch at and let go.

Help me to hold it! First it left

The yellowing fennel, run to seed

There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,

Some old tomb's ruin; yonder weed

Took up the floating weft,

Where one small orange cup amassed

Five beetles,—blind and green they grope

Among the honey-meal: and last,

Everywhere on the grassy slope

I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece

Of feathery grasses everywhere!

Silence and passion, joy and peace,

An everlasting wash of air—

Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,

Such miracles performed in play,

Such primal naked forms of flowers,

Such letting Nature have her way

While Heaven looks from its towers!

How say you? Let us, O my dove,

Let us be unashamed of soul,

As earth lies bare to heaven above!

How is it under our control

To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,

You that are just so much, no more.

Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free!

Where does the fault lie? what the core

Of the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,

See with your eyes, and set my heart

Beating by yours, and drink my fill

At your soul's springs,—your part, my part

In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,

Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,

Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose

And love it more than tongue can speak—

Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far

Out of that minute? Must I go

Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,

Onward, whenever light winds blow,

Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!

Where is the thread now? Off again!

The old trick! Only I discern—

Infinite passion, and the pain

Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS

[1855.]

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,

Making it blossom with pleasure,

Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,

Fit for her nest and her treasure.

Oh, what a hope beyond measure

Was the poor spray's, which the flying
feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!
This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer
went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent
on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

[1855.]

THAT was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead, and so was light.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily spired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

What they could my words expressed,
O my Love, my All, my One!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

So wore night; the East was grey,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers;
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—'When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes,

'One friend in that path shall be
To secure my steps from wrong:
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see.'

Never say—as something bodes—
'So, the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the taskmaster's curse
Than such music on the roads!

'When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning went,
Show the final storm begun—

'When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot,—
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where these are not?

'Has some plague a longer lease
Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees?'

Oh, how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE

[1855.]

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion.—Heaven or Hell?
She will not give me Heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win Heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

[1855.]

JUNE was not over,
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were—
'If I tire of your June, will she greatly
care?'

Well, Dear, indoors with you!
True, serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.

What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?

Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper!

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mends her bowers now, your hand
left unsightly

By plucking their roses, — my June will do
rightly,

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles

Of wine poured at mass-time, —
And choose One indulgent

To redness and sweetness:

Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong
insect-ridden,

And stop the fresh spinning, — why, June
will consider.

RESPECTABILITY

[1855.]

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim 'I know you both,
Have recognized your plighted troth,
Am sponsor for you: live in peace!' —
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament, —
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the
Seine,
And feel the Boulevard break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lip's contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word! — the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? down the court three lampions
flare —
Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE

[1855.]

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt
find her,

Next time, herself! — not the trouble be-
hind her

Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blos-
somed anew:

Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of
her feather.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune —

Range the wide house from the wing to
the centre.

Still the same chance! she goes out as I
enter.

Spend my whole day in the quest, — who
cares?

But 'tis twilight, you see, — with such
suites to explore,

Such closets to search, such alcoves to im-
portune!

LIFE IN A LOVE

[1855.]

ESCAPE me?

Never —
Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loath,
While the one eludes, must the other
pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear:
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce suc-
ceed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again, —
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest
bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the selfsame
mark,

I shape me —
Ever
Removed!

IN A YEAR

[1855.]

NEVER any more
 While I live,
 Need I hope to see his face
 As before.
 Once his love grown chill,
 Mine may strive—
 Bitterly we re-embrace,
 Single still.

Was it something said,
 Something done,
 Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
 Turn of head?
 Strange! that very way
 Love begun:
 I as little understand
 Love's decay.

When I sewed or drew,
 I recall
 How he looked as if I sung,
 — Sweetly too.
 If I spoke a word,
 First of all
 Up his cheek the colour sprung,
 Then he heard.

Sitting by my side,
 At my feet,
 So he breathed but air I breathed,
 Satisfied!
 I, too, at love's brim
 Touched the sweet:
 I would die if death bequeathed
 Sweet to him.

'Speak, I love thee best!'
 He exclaimed:
 'Let thy love my own foretell,'
 I confessed:
 'Clasp my heart on thine
 Now unblamed,
 Since upon thy soul as well
 Hangeth mine!'

Was it wrong to own,
 Being truth?
 Why should all the giving prove
 His alone?
 I had wealth and ease,
 Beauty, youth—
 Since my lover gave me love,
 I gave these.

That was all I meant,
 — To be just,
 And the passion I had raised,
 To content,
 Since he chose to change
 Gold for dust,
 If I gave him what he praised
 Was it strange?

Would he loved me yet,
 On and on,
 While I found some way undreamed
 — Paid my debt!
 Gave more life and more,
 Till, all gone,
 He should smile 'She never seemed
 Mine before.

'What — she felt the while,
 Must I think?
 Love 's so different with us men,'
 He should smile.
 'Dying for my sake —
 White and pink!
 Can't we touch these bubbles then
 But they break?'

Dear, the pang is brief,
 Do thy part,
 Have thy pleasure. How perplex
 Grows belief!
 Well, this cold clay clod
 Was man's heart.
 Crumble it — and what comes next?
 Is it God?

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL
of his friend Alfred, Somerset.
 A PICTURE AT FANO

[1855.]

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only
 leave
 That child, when thou hast done with
 him, for me!
 Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
 Shall find performed thy special ministry
 And time come for departure, thou, sus-
 pending
 Thy flight, may'st see another child for
 tending,
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no
 more,
 From where thou standest now, to where
 I gaze,
 — And suddenly my head is covered o'er
 With those wings, white above the child
 who prays
 Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee
 guarding
 Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
 Yon Heaven thy home, that waits and
 opes its door!

I would not look up thither past thy head
 Because the door opes, like that child, I
 know,
 For I should have thy gracious face instead.
 Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend
 me low

Like him, and lay, like his, my hands
together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently
tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's
spread?

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing
hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy
breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much
thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smooth-
ing
Distortion down till every nerve had sooth-
ing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be re-
paired!
I think how I should view the earth and
skies
And sea, when once again my brow was
bared
After thy healing, with such different
eyes.
O world, as God has made it! all is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is
duty.
What further may be sought for or
declared?

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!) — that little child
to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently, — with his own head
turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before
him
Of work to do, though Heaven was opening
o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
— My angel with me too: and since I
care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in
power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent),

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some
wrong —
I took one thought his picture struck from
me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear
oid friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far
end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA

[1855.]

AN, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after,
And the memory I started at —
My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather —
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY

[1855.]

STAND still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us: when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs
you —
Just saves your light to spend?

His clenched Hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the Future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their Present for this Past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
'Others give best at first, but Thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now!

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say — a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the Old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
 Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
 Whereof one drop worked miracles,
 And coloured like Astarte's eyes
 Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all
 Could criticize, and quote tradition
 How depths of blue sublimed some pall
 — To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
 Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
 The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
 Live welks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
 As if they still the water's lisp heard
 Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon
 Such hangings for his cedar-house,
 That, when gold-robed he took the throne
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
 Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's
 womb,
 What time, with ardours manifold,
 The bee goes singing to her groom,
 Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
 Till cunning comes to pound and squeeze
 And clarify, — refine to proof
 The liquor filtered by degrees,
 While the world stands aloof.

And there 's the extract, flaked and fine,
 And priced and saleable at last!
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes
 combine
 To paint the Future from the Past,
 Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats:
 Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his
 cup:

Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
 What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

[1855.]

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!
 Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
 Answer the question I've put you so oft —
 What do you mean by your mountainous
 fugues?
 See, we're alone in the loft, —

I, the poor organist here,
 Hugues, the composer of note —
 Dead, though, and done with, this many a
 year:
 Let 's have a colloquy, something to
 quote,
 Make the world prick up its ear!

See, the church empties apace:
 Fast they extinguish the lights —
 Hallo there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!
 Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to
 rights,
 Balks one of holding the base.

See, our huge house of the sounds,
 Hushing its hundreds at once,
 Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
 — Oh, you may challenge them, not a
 response
 Get the church-saints on their rounds!

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
 — March, with the moon to admire,
 Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about.
 Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
 Put rats and mice to the rout —

Aloys and Jurien and Just —
 Order things back to their place,
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust.
 Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-
 lace,
 Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,
 Just now, your masterpiece, hard number
 twelve?

Here's what should strike, — could one
 handle it cunningly:
 Help the axe, give it a helve!

Page after page as I played,
 Every bar's rest, where one wipes
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and
 surveyed,
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
 You, with brow ruled like a score
 Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
 Like two great breves as they wrote them
 of yore
 Each side that bar, your straight beak!

Sure you said — 'Good, the mere notes!
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,
 Know what procured me our Company's
 votes —
 Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,
 Parted the sheep from the goats!'

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost
inch—

I believe in you, but that's not enough:
Give my conviction a clinch!

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see
Fit in itself for much blame or much
praise—

Answered no less, where no answer needs
be:

Off start the Two on their ways!

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help—
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his
nose,

So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close!

One dissertates, he is candid;
Two must discept,—has distinguished;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the
thing wished:

Back to One, goes the case bandied.

One says his say with a difference—
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance—
Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-
restraining—

Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

One is incisive, corrosive;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explo-
sive;

Four overbears them all, strident and
strepitant:

Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what
issue?

Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

Est fuga, volvitur rota!

On we drift. Where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute
their quota—

Something is gained, if one caught but
the import—

Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, riposting, subjoining,
All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an
instance I'm trying . . .

There! See our roof, its gilt moulding
and groining

Under those spider-webs lying!

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till one exclaims—'But where 's music,
the dickens?

Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web
strengthens

—Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?'

I for man's effort am zealous:
Prove me such censure 's unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
Hopes 'twas for something his organ-
pipes sounded,

Tiring three boys at the bellows?

Is it your moral of Life?

Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing
his shuttle,

Death ending all with a knife?

Over our heads Truth and Nature—
Still our life 's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where
that lodges,

Palled beneath Man's usurpature!

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland.
Nothings grow something which quietly
closes

Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of
the far land

Gets through our comments and glozes.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions
Down the past ages must know more
than this age!

Leave the web all its dimensions!

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit—try again—what 's the
clef?

'Faith, it 's no trifle for pipe and for
tabor—

Four flats, the minor in F.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
Truth 's golden o'er us although we re-
fuse it—

Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

Hugues! I advise *meâ poenâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear
the arena!

Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-
Organ,

Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
 . . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket!
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket!
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-
 prayers,
 And find a poor devil has ended his cares
 At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-
 riddled stairs?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP [1842.]

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
 A mile or so away
 On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans
 That soar, to earth may fall,
 Let once my army-leader Lannes
 Waver at yonder wall,'—
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse's mane, a boy:
 You hardly could suspect—
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came through)
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

'Well,' cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace
 We've got you Ratisbon!
 The Marshal's in the market-place,
 And you'll be there anon
 To see your flag-bird flap his vans
 Where I, to heart's desire,
 Perched him!' The Chief's eye flashed;
 his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother-eagle's eye
 When her bruised eaglet breathes:
 'You're wounded!' 'Nay,' his soldier's
 pride
 Touched to the quick, he said:
 'I'm killed, Sire!' And his Chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

[1842.]

THAT 's my last Duchess painted on the
 wall,
 Looking as if she were alive; I call
 That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's
 hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands,
 Will't please you sit and look at her?

I said ~~somebody with him~~
 'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured counte-
 nance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
 But to myself they turned (since none
 puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they
 durst, ~~ask me not easily interrogated~~

How such a glance came there; so, not
 the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas
 not

Her husband's presence only, called that
 spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
 Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle
 laps

Over my Lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 Half-flush that dies along her throat'; such
 stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause
 enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart . . . how shall I say? . . . too
 soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went every-
 where.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her
 breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white
 mule

She rode with round the terrace—all and
 each

Would draw from her alike the approving
 speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—
 good; but thanked

Somehow . . . I know not how . . . as if
 she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—(which I have not)—to make
 your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say 'Just
this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made
excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping, and
I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no
doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed
without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave
commands; *He's running a new ship*
Then all smiles stopped together. There
she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll
meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your Master's known munifi-
cence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I
avowed *action! Emory stands for g. to*
At starting, is my object. *Nay, we'll go*
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune,
though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze
for me.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

[Published in *Hood's Magazine*, 1844. — Reprinted
and revised, 1845.]

MORNING, evening, noon and night
'Praise God,' sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell:

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, 'Praise God.'

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, 'Well done;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

'As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

'This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome.'

Said Theocrite, 'Would God that I
Might praise Him, that great way, and die!'

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, 'Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight.'

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Liv'd there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, 'A praise is in mine ear;
There is no doubt in it, no fear:

'So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

'Clearer loves sound other ways:
I miss my little human praise.'

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off
fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned.
And on his sight the angel burned.

'I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
And set thee here; I did not well.

'Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
Vain was thy dream of many a year,

'Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it
dropped —
Creation's chorus stopped!

'Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

'With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up Creation's pausing strain.

'Back to the cell and poor employ:
Become the craftsman and the boy!'

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's Dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

THE GLOVE

[1845.]

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*.)

'HEIGHO,' yawned one day King Francis,
'Distance all value enhances!
When a man's busy, why, leisure
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
'Faith, and at leisure once is he?
Straightway he wants to be busy.
Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
Caught thinking war the true pastime!
Is there a reason in metre?
Give us your speech, master Peter!'
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
'Sire,' I replied, 'joys prove cloudlets:
Men are the merest Ixions' —
Here the King whistled aloud, 'Let 's
... Heigho ... go look at our lions!
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the fore-
most

With the dame he professed to adore
most —

Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the terrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared
follow.

And shelled to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.

They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was trou-
bled,

The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sput-
ter;

Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion!
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement
Marot

(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu!

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On the space that might stand him in best
stead:

For who knew, he thought, what the
amazement,

The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered.
The lion at last was delivered?

Aye, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.

'How he stands!' quoth the King: 'we may
well swear,

(No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,
And so can afford the confession.)
We exercise wholesome discretion
In keeping aloof from his threshold;
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh
hold,

Their first would too pleasantly purloin
The visitor's brisket or sirloin:
But who 's he would prove so foolhardy?
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!'

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight 's a
tarrier!

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while the
lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sap-
phire,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

'Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
So should I!'—cried the King—'twas
mere vanity,
Not love, set that task to humanity!
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's cloth-
ing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what 'speeches like gold' were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
If she wished not the rash deed's recal-
ment?

'For I'—so I spoke—'am a Poet:
Human nature,—behoves that I know it!'

She told me, 'Too long had I heard
Of the deed proved alone by the word:
For my love—what De Lorge would not
dare!

With my scorn—what De Lorge could
compare!

And the endless descriptions of death
He would brave when my lip formed a
breath,

I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
Must offer my love in return.

When I looked on your lion, it brought
All the dangers at once to my thought,
Encountered by all sorts of men,
Before he was lodged in his den,—
From the poor slave whose club or bare
hands

Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
With no King and no Court to applaud,
By no shame, should he shrink, over-awed,

Yet to capture the creature made shift,
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
—To the page who last leaped o'er the
fence

Of the pit, on no greater pretence
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
So, wiser I judged it to make
One trial what "death for my sake"
Really meant, while the power was yet
mine,

Than to wait until time should define
Such a phrase not so simply as I,
Who took it to mean just "to die."
The blow a glove gives is but weak:
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?'

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway;
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve
her)

—He'd have scarce thought you did him
the worst turn

If you whispered 'Friend, what you'd get,
first earn!'

And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they mar-
ried,

To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men
vie,

Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you
call her?

The Beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week
well.

And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled—'His nerves are
grown firmer:

Mine he brings now and utters no mur-
mur!'

Venienti occurrere morbo!

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES

[1845.]

I've a Friend, over the sea;
 I like him, but he loves me.
 It all grew out of the books I write;
 They find such favour in his sight
 That he slaughters you with savage looks
 Because you don't admire my books:
 He does himself though,—and if some vein
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
 Round should I just turn quietly,
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
 Till I found him, come from his foreign
 land,

To be my nurse in this poor place,
 And make my broth and wash my face
 And light my fire, and, all the while,
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile
 That I told him 'Better have kept away
 Than come and kill me, night and day,
 With, worse than fever's throbs and shoots,
 The creaking of his clumsy boots.'
 I am as sure that this he would do,
 As that Saint Paul's is striking Two.
 And I think I had rather . . . woe is me!
 — Yes, rather see him than not see,
 If lifting a hand would seat him there
 Before me in the empty chair
 To-night, when my head aches indeed,
 And I can neither think nor read
 Nor make these purple fingers hold
 The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady—there he wakes,
 The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
 Within me, at her name, to pray
 Fate send some creature in the way
 Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
 Upthrust and outward-borne,
 So I might prove myself that sea
 Of passion which I needs must be!
 Call my thoughts false and my fancies
 quaint

And my style infirm and its figures faint,
 All the critics say, and more blame yet,
 And not one angry word you get!
 But, please you, wonder I would put
 My cheek beneath that Lady's foot
 Rather than trample under mine
 The laurels of the Florentine,
 And you shall see how the Devil spends
 A fire God gave for other ends!
 I tell you, I stride up and down
 This garret, crowned with love's best
 crown,

And feasted with love's perfect feast,
 To think I kill for her, at least,
 Body and soul and peace and fame,
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
 — So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
 Filled full, eaten out and in

With the face of her, the eyes of her,
 The lips, the little chin, the stir
 Of shadow round her mouth; and she
 — I'll tell you, — calmly would decree
 That I should roast at a slow fire,
 If that would compass her desire
 And make her one whom they invite
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be Heaven; there must be Hell;
 Meantime, there is our Earth here—well!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

[1845.]

THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
 And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds through the country-side
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have
 plucked
 The fire-flies from the roof above,
 Bright creeping through the moss they love.
 — How long it seems since Charles was
 lost!

Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
 The country in my very sight;
 And when that peril ceased at night,
 The sky broke out in red dismay
 With signal-fires; well, there I lay
 Close covered o'er in my recess,
 Up to the neck in ferns and crevices,
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,
 And Charles's miserable end,
 And much beside, two days; the third,
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
 The peasants from the village go
 To work among the maize; you know,
 With us in Lombardy, they bring
 Provisions packed on mules, a string
 With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
 These I let pass in jingling line,
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
 The peasants from the village, too;
 For at the very rear would troop
 Their wives and sisters in a group
 To help, I knew; when these had passed,
 I threw my glove to strike the last,
 Taking the chance: she did not start,
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart
 One instant, rapidly glanced round,
 And saw me beckon from the ground:
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
 She picked my glove up while she stripped
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest
 With that; my glove lay in her breast:
 Then I drew breath: they disappeared:
 It was for Italy I feared!

An hour, and she returned alone
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.
 Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me
 Tested the hopes of Italy;
 Had devised a certain tale
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
 To persuade a peasant of its truth:
 I meant to call a freak of youth
 His hiding, and give hopes of pay,
 And no temptation to betray.
 But when I saw that woman's face,
 Its calm simplicity of grace,
 And Italy's own attitude
 In which she walked thus far, and stood,
 Planting each naked foot so firm,
 To crush the snake and spare the worm —
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,
 I am that man upon whose head
 They fix the price, because I hate
 The Austrians over us: the State
 Will give you gold — oh, gold so much,
 If you betray me to their clutch,
 And be your death, for aught I know,
 If once they find you saved their foe.
 Now, you must bring me food and drink,
 And also paper, pen and ink,
 And carry safe what I shall write
 To Padua, which you'll reach at night
 Before the Duomo shuts; go in,
 And wait till Tenebrae begin;
 Walk to the Third Confessional,
 Between the pillar and the wall,
 And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes
 peace?*

May it a second time, then cease;
 And if the voice inside returns,
 From Christ and Freedom: what concerns
 The cause of Peace? — for answer, slip
 My letter where you placed your lip;
 Then come back happy we have done
 Our mother service — I, the son,
 As you the daughter of our land!

Three mornings more, she took her stand
 In the same place, with the same eyes:
 There was no surer of sun-rise
 Than of her coming: we conferred
 Of her own prospects, and I heard
 She had a lover — stout and tall,
 She said — then let her eyelids fall,
 'He could do much' — as if some doubt
 Entered her heart, — then, passing out,
 She could not speak for others, who
 Had other thoughts; herself she knew.
 And so she brought me drink and food.
 After four days, the scouts pursued
 Another path; at last arrived
 The help my Paduan friends contrived
 To furnish me: she brought the news.
 For the first time I could not choose

But kiss her hand, and lay my own
 Upon her head — 'This faith was shown
 To Italy, our mother; she
 Uses my hand and blesses thee!
 She followed down to the sea-shore;
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning — much less wished for — aught
 Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die!
 I never was in love; and since
 Charles proved false, nothing could con-
 vince

My inmost heart I had a friend.
 However, if it pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself — say, three —
 I know at least what one should be;
 I would grasp Metetrnich until
 I felt his red wet throat distil
 In blood thro' these two hands; and next,
 — Nor much for that am I perplexed —
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
 Should die slow of a broken heart
 Under his new employers: last
 — Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
 Do I grow old and out of strength.
 If I resolved to seek at length
 My father's house again, how scared
 They all would look, and unprepared!
 My brothers live in Austria's pay
 — Disowned me long ago, men say;
 And all my early mates who used
 To praise me so — perhaps induced
 More than one early step of mine —
 Are turning wise; while some opine
 'Freedom grows License,' some suspect
 'Haste breeds Delay,' and recollect
 They always said, such premature
 Beginnings never could endure!
 So, with a sullen 'All 's for best,'
 The land seems settling to its rest.
 I think, then, I should wish to stand
 This evening in that dear, lost land,
 Over the sea the thousand miles,
 And know if yet that woman smiles
 With the calm smile; some little farm
 She lives in there, no doubt; what harm
 If I sat on the door-side bench,
 And, while her spindle made a trench
 Fantastically in the dust,
 Inquired of all her fortunes — just
 Her children's ages and their names,
 And what may be the husband's aims
 For each of them. I'd talk this out,
 And sit there, for an hour about,
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing — how
 It steals the time! To business now!

IN A GONDOLA

[1842.]

He sings

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears
part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its
dwelling-place.

She speaks

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
'This woman's heart and soul and brain
Are mine as much as this gold chain
She bids me wear; which' (say again)
'I choose to make by cherishing
A precious thing, or choose to fling
Over the boat-side, ring by ring.'
And yet once more say . . . no word
more!
Since words are only words. Give o'er!
Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet-name
Which, if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.
What 's left but—all of me to take?
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage
In practising with gems can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes: so, 'sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings

I

Past we glide, and past, and past!
What 's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
Grey Zanobi 's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride:
Past we glide!

II

Past we glide, and past, and past!
Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
Past we glide!

She sings

I

The Moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide open burst.

II

The Bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings

I

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can
pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And
now,
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou!

II

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is wither-
ing away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And
now,
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou!

He muses

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows, just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thru
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing

Lie back; could thought of mine improve
you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!

Snow-white must they spring, to blend
 With your flesh, but I intend
 They shall deepen to the end,
 Broader, into burning gold,
 Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
 Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
 To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
 As if a million sword-blades hurled
 Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me Thou, the only real!
 And scare away this mad Ideal
 That came, nor motions to depart!
 Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses

I

What if the Three should catch at last
 Thy serenader? While there's ast
 Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
 Gian pinions me, Himself has passed
 His stilet thro' my back; I reel;
 And . . . is it Thou I feel?

II

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
 Past every church that saints and saves,
 Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
 By Lido's wet accursed graves,
 They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
 And . . . on Thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-
 deep,
 As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
 Caught this way? Death's to fear from
 flame, or steel,
 Or poison doubtless; but from water —
 feel!
 Go find the bottom! Would you stay me!
 There!
 Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-
 grass
 To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
 I flung away: since you have praised my
 hair,
 'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks

Row home? must we row home? Too
 surely
 Know I where its front's demurely
 Over the Giudecca piled;
 Window just with window mating,
 Door on door exactly waiting,
 All's the set face of a child:
 But behind it, where's a trace
 Of the staidness and reserve,
 And formal lines without a curve,
 In the same child's playing-face?
 No two windows look one way
 O'er the small sea-water thread

Below them. Ah, the autumn day
 I, passing, saw you overhead!
 First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
 Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you —
 To catch your lory that must needs
 Escape just then, of all times then,
 To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
 And make me happiest of men.
 I scarce could breathe to see you reach
 So far back o'er the balcony
 To catch him ere he climbed too high
 Above you in the Smyrna peach
 That quick the round smooth cord of gold
 This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
 Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
 The Roman girls were wont, of old,
 When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
 To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
 Dear lory, may his beak retain
 Ever its delicate rose stain
 As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
 Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
 Than mine! what should your chamber do?
 — With all its rarities that ache
 In silence while day lasts, but wake
 At night-time and their life renew,
 Suspended just to pleasure you
 That brought against their will together
 These objects, and, while days lasts, weave
 Around them such a magic tether
 That they look dumb: your harp, believe,
 With all the sensitive tight strings
 That dare not speak, now to itself
 Breathes slumberously as if some elf
 Went in and out the chords, his wings
 Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
 As an angel may, between the maze
 Of midnight palace-pillars, on
 And on, to sow God's plagues have gone
 Through guilty glorious Babylon.
 And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
 Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
 As the dry limpet for the lymph
 Come with a tune he knows so well.
 And how your statues' hearts must swell!
 And how your pictures must descend
 To see each other, friend with friend!
 Oh, could you take them by surprise,
 You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
 Doing the quaintest courtesies
 To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
 And, deeper into her rock den,
 Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
 You'd find retreated from the ken
 Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser —
 As if the Tizian thinks of her,
 And is not, rather, gravely bent
 On seeing for himself what toys
 Are these, his progeny invent,
 What litter now the board employs
 Whereon he signed a document

That got him murdered! Each enjoys
 Its night so well, you cannot break
 The sport up, so, indeed must make
 More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
 Is used to tie the jasmine back
 That overfloods my room with sweets,
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
 My Zanze: if the ribbon 's black,
 The Three are watching; keep away.

II

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath
 A mesh of water-weeds about
 Its prow, as if he unaware
 Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair;
 That I may throw a paper out
 As you and he go underneath.

There 's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are
 we!

Only one minute more to-night with me?
 Resume your past self of a month ago!
 Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
 The lady with the colder breast than snow:
 Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my
 hand

More than I touch yours when I step to
 land,

And say, 'All thanks, Siora!—

Heart to heart,

And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we
 part,

Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine
 thou art!

He is surprised, and stabbed

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and
 best

Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on
 thy breast.

Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards!
 Care

Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
 My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not
 scorn

To death, because they never lived: but I
 Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more
 kiss)—can die!

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

[1855.]

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
 Since now at length my fate I know,
 Since nothing all my love avails,
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must
 be—

My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness!
 Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
 Only the memory of the same,
 —And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with
 me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
 When pity would be softening through,
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two

With life or death in the balance: right!
 The blood replenished me again;
 My last thought was at least not vain:
 I and my mistress, side by side
 Shall be together, breathe and ride,
 So one day more am I deified—

Who knows but the world may end to-
 night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
 By many benedictions—sun's
 And moon's and evening-star's at once—
 And so, you, looking and loving best,
 Conscious grew, your passion drew
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
 Down on you, near and yet more near,
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
 Thus leant she and lingered—joy and
 fear!

Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
 Smoothed itself out—a long-cramped scroll
 Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
 Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?
 Had I said that, had I done this,
 So might I gain, so might I miss.
 Might she have loved me? just as well
 She might have hated,—who can tell?
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?
 And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,
 As the world rushed by on either side.
 I thought,—All labour, yet no less
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty Done, the Undone vast,
 This Present of theirs with the hopeful
 Past!

I hoped she would love me: here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
 What heart alike conceived and dared?
 What act proved all its thought had been?
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?
 We ride and I see her bosom heave.
 There 's many a crown for who can reach.
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!

The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-
stones

My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? well,
Your brains beat into rhythm—you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much—but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than you who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus—whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you, grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!'
I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being; had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
—Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest—
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem
best?

Now, Heaven and she are beyond this
ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if Heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,

We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

[1845.]

I

YOU'RE my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke,
too;
So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you've passed the corn-field
country,

Where vineyards leave off, flocks are
packed,

And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again

To another greater, wilder country,
That 's one vast red, drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many
a vein

Whence iron 's dug, and copper 's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,

And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-
shore,

—And the whole is our Duke's country!

III

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was happy and young, not old!)
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower:

We are of like age to an hour.
My father was Huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that 's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
'And,' quoth the Kaiser's courier, 'since
The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side.'
The Duke looked down and seemed to
wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,

Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners,
Of all achievements after all manners,
And 'aye,' said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,

What he called stink, and they, perfume:
— They should have set him on red Berold,
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tan-
nage

Such a day as to-day in the merry sun-
shine!

Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot
merlin!

(Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its
game!

Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like
flame!)

Had they broached a white-beer cask from
Berlin!

— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,
And rosy with sweet, — we shall not quar-
rel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
And now was the time to revisit her tribe,
So, abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother
again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?
— Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land
of Lays,

The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,

Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, with-
out knowing it,

This Duke would fain know he was, with-
out being it;

'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of
his showing it,

Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of
our seeing it,

He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts
of them torn-out:

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
— They should have set him on red Berold,
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we
heard:

And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the Lady, in time of spring.

— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they clin
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths

I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle

In winter-time when you need to muffle.

But the Duke had a mind we should cut a
figure,

And so we saw the Lady arrive:

My friend, I have seen a white crane big-
ger!

She was the smallest lady alive,
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at
the mead,

Straight at the castle, that's best indeed

To look at from outside the walls:

As for us, styled the 'serfs and thralls,'
She as much thanked me as if she had said

it,

(With her eyes, do you understand?)

Because I patted her horse while I led it;

And Max, who rode on her other hand,

Said, no bird flew past but she inquired

What its true name was, nor ever seemed
tired —

If that was an eagle she saw hover,

And the green and grey bird on the field
was the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke:

And as down she sprang, the small foot
pointed

On to my hand, — as with a rebuke,

And as if his backbone were not jointed,

The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
 And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
 And, mind you, his mother all the while
 Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'-ward;
 And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
 Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
 And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
 The Lady's face stopped its play,
 As if her first hair had grown grey —
 For such things must begin some one day!

VII

In a day or two she was well again;
 As who should say, 'You labour in vain!
 This is all a jest against God, who meant
 I should ever be, as I am, content
 And glad in His sight; therefore, glad I
 will be!'
 So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire —
 Could not rest, could not tire —
 To a stone she might have given life!
 (I myself loved once, in my day)
 — For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's
 wife,
 (I had a wife, I know what I say)
 Never in all the world such an one!
 And here was plenty to be done,
 And she that could do it, great or small,
 She was to do nothing at all.
 There was already this man in his post,
 This in his station, and that in his office,
 And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at
 most,
 To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
 Now outside the Hall, now in it,
 To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
 At the proper place in the proper minute,
 And die away the life between.
 And it was amusing enough, each infrac-
 tion
 Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)
 To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
 With which the young Duke and the old
 Dame
 Would let her advise, and criticize,
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
 And, childlike, parcel out praise or blame:
 They bore it all in complacent guise,
 As though an artificer, after contriving
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,
 Should find with delight it could motion
 to strike him!
 So found the Duke, and his mother like
 him:
 The Lady hardly got a rebuff —
 That had not been contemptuous enough,
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded ap-
 plause,
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
 As the way is with a hid chagrin;
 And the Duke perceived that she was
 ailing,
 And said in his heart, 'Tis done to spite
 me,
 But I shall find in my power to right me!
 Don't swear, friend — the old one, many
 a year,
 Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you
 shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-
 warning,
 When the stag had to break with his foot,
 of a morning,
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a
 trice,
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
 And another and another, and faster and
 faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water
 rolled:
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our
 master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in
 season.
 And found, since the calendar bade him
 be hearty,
 He should do the Middle Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
 Always provided, old books showed the
 way of it!
 What meant old poets by their strictures?
 And when old poets had said their say of
 it,
 How taught old painters in their pictures?
 We must revert to the proper channels,
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
 And gather up woodcraft's authentic tra-
 ditions:
 Here was food for our various ambitions,
 As on each case, exactly stated,
 — To encourage your dog, now, the prop-
 erest chirrup,
 Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting
 your stirrup —
 We of the household took thought and
 debated.
 Blessed was he whose back ached with the
 jerkin
 His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
 Blesseder he who nobly sunk 'ohs'
 And 'ahs' while he tugged on his grand-
 sire's trunk-hose;
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,
 Each slouching before and behind like the
 scallop,
 And able to serve at sea for a shallop,

Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
 So that the deer now to make a short rhyme on't,
 What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,
 Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,
 And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on't!

XI

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness
 Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
 The Duke put this question, 'The Duke's part provided,
 Had not the Duchess some share in the business?'
 For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
 Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
 And, after much laying of heads together,
 Somebody's cap got a notable feather
 By the announcement with proper unction
 That he had discovered the lady's function;
 Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
 'When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
 Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,
 And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
 In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
 Let her preside at the disemboweling.'
 Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
 As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
 And thrust her broad wings like a banner
 Into a coop for vulgar pigeon;
 And if day by day, and week by week,
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
 Would it cause you any great surprise
 If, when you decided to give her an airing,
 You found she needed a little preparing?
 —I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth alight,
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
 And much wrong now that used to be right,

So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
 Was conduct ever more affronting?
 With all the ceremony settled—
 With the towel ready, and the sewer
 Polishing up his oldest ewer,
 And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
 Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled,—
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
 And when she persisted nevertheless,—
 Well, I suppose here 's the time to confess
 That there ran half round our Lady's chamber
 A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
 And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
 Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose,
 why, a fervent
 Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant;
 And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
 How could I keep at any vast distance?
 And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,
 The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
 Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
 And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
 Turned her over to his yellow mother
 To learn what was held decorous and lawful;
 And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
 As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
 Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once!
 What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station,
 The wisdom of age and the folly of youth,
 at once,
 Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
 In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
 And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,
 And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
 And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
 Well, somehow or other it ended at last
 And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
 And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
 Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
 Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
 Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
 From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn
 Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
 And here was the huntsman bidding un-kennel,

And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker
 blustered,
 With feather dank as a bough of wet
 fennel;
 For the court-yard's four walls were filled
 with fog
 You might have cut as an axe chops a log.
 Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
 And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
 Since, before breakfast, a man feels but
 queasily.
 And a sinking at the lower abdomen
 Begins the day with indifferent omen.
 And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it
 asunder
 This way and that from the valley under;
 And, looking through the court-yard arch,
 Down in the valley, what should meet him
 But a troop of Gipsies on their march,
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet
 him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
 After reaching all lands beside;
 North they go, South they go, trooping or
 lonely,
 And still, as they travel far and wide.
 Catch them and keep now a trace here, a
 trace there,
 That puts you in mind of a place here, a
 place there.
 But with us, I believe they rise out of the
 ground,
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned;
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
 The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
 For the earth—not a use to which they
 don't turn it,
 The ore that grows in the mountain's
 womb,
 Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn
 it—
 Whether they weld you, for instance, a
 snaffle
 With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
 Or a lock that 's a puzzle of wards within
 wards;
 Or, if your colt's forefoot inclines to curve
 inwards,
 Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on
 a swivel
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
 Then they cast bells like the shell of the
 winkle,
 That keep a stout heart in the ram with
 their tinkle;

But the sand—they pinch and pound it
 like otters;
 Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and
 potters!
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
 As if in pure water you dropped and let die
 A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
 And that other sort, their crowning pride,
 With long white threads distinct inside,
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which
 dangle
 Loose such a length and never tangle,
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear
 waters,
 And the cup-lily couches with all the white
 daughters:
 Such are the works they put their hand to,
 The uses they turn and twist iron and
 sand to.
 And these made the troop, which our Duke
 saw sally
 Towards his castle from out of the valley,
 Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
 Come out with the morning to greet our
 riders.
 And up they wound till they reached the
 ditch,
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the
 group,
 By her gait, directly, and her stoop,
 I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
 The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
 And, sure as the autumn season came
 round,
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
 And every time, as she swore, for the last
 time.
 And presently she was seen to sidle
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up
 As under its nose the old witch peered up
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
 Of no use now but to gather brine,
 And began a kind of level whine
 Such as they used to sing to their viols
 When their ditties they go grinding
 Up and down with nobody minding:
 And then, as of old, at the end of the
 humming
 Her usual presents were forthcoming
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of
 trebles,
 (Just a seashore stone holding a dozen fine
 pebbles,)
 Or a porcelain mouthpiece to screw on a
 pipe-end,—
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely
 vouchsafe

A word in reply; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch
safe,—

Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his Lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel mean-
ing—

For it struck him, the babe just wanted
weaning;

If one gave her a taste of what life was
and sorrow,

She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
morrow;

And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent wellnigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural
fur-suit)

He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his
gesture,

The life of the Lady so flower-like and
delicate

With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew
near

He told the crone, as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear

With circumspection and mystery,
The main of the Lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude;

And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits
tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence
brightening.

As though she engaged with hearty good-
will

Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfill,
And promised the Lady a thorough fright-
ening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who impes
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the
hernshaw,

He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour

For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere
curveter,

Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo

Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and
servitor,

And back I turned and bade the crone fol-
low.

And what makes me confident what 's to
be told you

Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold
you,

There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in
stature,

And her step kept pace with mine nor
falterd,

As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the
change meant,

Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with toman
Which proves the veil a Persian wom-
an's:

And under her brow, like a snail's horns
newly

Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakable eye-points duly

Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry;

I told the command and produced my com-
panion,

And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the Lady spoken:
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first
of all,

I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so
soundly

Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin
you

'Twixt the eyes where the life holds gar-
rison,

—Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration

Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,

And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinnier crested

The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one
tree.

When, in a moment, my ear was arrested

By — was it singing, or was it saying,
 Or a strange musical instrument playing
 In the chamber? — and to be certain
 I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
 And there lay Jacynth asleep,
 Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
 In a rosy sleep along the floor
 With her head against the door;
 While in the midst, on the seat of state,
 Was a queen — the Gipsy woman late,
 With head and face downbent
 On the Lady's head and face intent:
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
 The Lady sat between her knees
 And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands
 met,
 And on those hands her chin was set,
 And her upturned face met the face of the
 crone
 Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
 As if she could double and quadruple
 At pleasure the play of either pupil
 — Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
 They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.
 I said, 'Is it blessing, is it banning,
 Do they applaud you or burlesque you —
 Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?'
 But, just as I thought to spring in to the
 rescue,
 At once I was stopped by the Lady's ex-
 pression:
 For it was life her eyes were drinking
 From the crone's wide pair above unwink-
 ing,
 — Life's pure fire received without shrink-
 ing,
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving
 Told you no single drop they were leaving,
 — Life, that filling her, passed redundant
 Into her very hair, back swerving
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
 As her head thrown back showed the
 white throat curving;
 And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
 Moving to the mystic measure,
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.
 I stopped short, more and more con-
 founded,
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glis-
 tened,
 As she listened and she listened:
 When all at once a hand detained me,
 The selfsame contagion gained me,
 And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
 Making out words and prose and rhyme,
 Till it seemed that the music furled
 Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped;
 From under the words it first had propped,
 And left them midway in the world:
 Word took word as hand takes hand,
 I could hear at last, and understand,
 And when I held the unbroken thread,
 The Gipsy said: —

'And so at last we find my tribe,
 And so I set thee in the midst,
 And to one and all of them describe
 What thou saidst and what thou didst,
 Our long and terrible journey through,
 And all thou art ready to say and do
 In the trials that remain:
 I trace them the vein and the other vein
 That meet on thy brow and part again,
 Making our rapid mystic mark;
 And I bid my people prove and probe
 Each eye's profound and glorious globe
 Till they detect the kindred spark
 In those depths so dear and dark,
 Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
 Circling over the midnight sea.
 And on that round young cheek of thine
 I make them recognize the tinge,
 As when of the costly scarlet wine
 They drip so much as will impinge
 And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
 One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
 Over a silver plate whose sheen
 Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
 For so I prove thee, to one and all,
 Fit, when my people ope their breast,
 To see the sign, and hear the call,
 And take the vow, and stand the test
 Which adds one more child to the rest —
 When the breast is bare and the arms are
 wide,
 And the world is left outside.
 For there is probation to decree,
 And many and long must the trials be
 Thou shalt victoriously endure,
 If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
 Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
 Of the prize he dug from its mountain-
 tomb, —
 Let once the vindicating ray
 Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
 And steel and fire have done their part
 And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
 So, trial after trial past,
 Wilt thou fall at the very last
 Breathless, half in trance
 With the thrill of the great deliverance.
 Into our arms for evermore;
 And thou shalt know, those arms once
 curled
 About thee, what we knew before,
 How love is the only good in the world.
 Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
 Or brain devise, or hand approve!
 Stand up, look below,
 It is our life at thy feet we throw
 To step with into light and joy;
 Not a power of life but we'll employ
 To satisfy thy nature's want;
 Art thou the tree that props the plant,
 Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree —
 Canst thou help us, must we help thee?

If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has
done;

Though each apart were never so weak,
Ye vainly through the world should seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right:
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend,—as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee,
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine
cleaves,

Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is here?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and I could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well—
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak
true,

Let them say what thou shalt do!
Only, be 'sure thy daily life,
In its peace, or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved;
We pursue thy whole career,
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
We are beside thee, in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!
Whether it is thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters
meet

In the crowded city's horrible street;
Or thou step alone through the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage:
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind?
Ponder on the entire Past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh, with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,

And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—'

Aye, then, indeed, something would hap-
pen!

But what? For here her voice changed
like a bird's;

There grew more of the music and less of
the words;

Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All that I've forgotten as well as what
lingers

In this old brain of mine that 's but ill
able

To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stam-
mering

—More fault of those who had the ham-
mering

Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion,—

Just, do you mark, when the song was
sweetest,

The peace most deep and the charm com-
pletest,

There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!

And my sense returned, so strangely ban-
ished,

And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring
made I,

Down from the casement, round to the
portal,

Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than
mortal

Stood, with a face where to my mind cen-
tered

All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by
palsy.

She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,

And that I had nothing to do, for the rest.
But wait her commands, obey and be duti-
ful.

Not that, in fact, there was any command-
ing,

—I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's
expanding,

And I was hers to live or to die.

As for finding what she wanted,

You know God Almighty granted

Such little signs should serve wild crea-
tures

To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend re-
quires,

And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The courtyard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married
her.

And, do you know, though it 's easy de-
ceiving

Oneself in such matters, I can't help be-
lieving

The Lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath
her

Would have been only too glad for her
service

To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk
dervise,

But unable to pay proper duty where ow-
ing it

Was reduced to that pitiful method of
showing it:

For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's
begetting,

(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shift-
ing,

By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused
me,—

I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy be-
hind her,

And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was, in
readiness

Whenever God should please she needed
me,—

Then, do you know, her face looked down
on me

With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her
bosom—

And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that 's worse,

Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may
gain

Such a reward,—I should have gone home
again,

Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned my-
self!

It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make

To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,

Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgement),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.

And then,—and then,—to cut short,—
this is idle,

These are feelings it is not good to fos-
ter,—

I pushed the gate wide, she shook the
bridle,

And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost
her.

- xvi

When the liquor 's out, why clink the
cannakin?

I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the

mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's

yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the

spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving

Carib,
When she heard, what she called, the flight

of the feloness
—But it seems such child's play,

What they said and did with the Lady
away!

And to dance on, when we've lost the
music,

Always made me—and no doubt makes
you—sick.

Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked
so stern

As that sweet form disappeared through
the postern,

She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed

nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went

on,
And my head 's one that its spite was

spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,

And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,

As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder

Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,

That no one should touch on the story
to wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled
fiery,
So, they made no search and small in-
quiry —
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a
visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't
want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the
frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke
was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's
stead,
And took, in her place, the household's
head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the
nauseous,
I could favour you with -sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the
Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's
yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of
ceruse:
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You're my friend —
What a thing friendship is, world without
end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious
runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly,
sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —
Friendship may match with that monarch
of fluids;
Each supple a dry brain, fills you its ins-
and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when
the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and
guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and
arrant ease.
I have seen my little Lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest
of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you
before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast
of it:
And now it is made — why, my heart's
blood, that went trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main
ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do:
I must see this fellow his sad life through —
He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with:
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get
done with,
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adaptor,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion,
And breast in a hauberck, his heels he'll
kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our
Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with
a blue crust,
Then, I shall scrape together my earnings;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth
reposes,
And our children all went the way of the
roses:
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned
you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear
presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleas-
antly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age? He must hurry
more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year
to hold:
When we mind labour, then only, we're too
old —
What age had Methusalem when he begat
Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted
ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts
with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the
Gipsies,
And find my Lady, or hear the last news
of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy
hop,
Sunburned all over like an Aethiop.

And when my Cotnar begins to operate
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a
 proper rate,
 And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each
 flaccid dent,
 I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
 'You never knew then, how it all ended.
 What fortunes good or bad attended
 The little Lady your Queen befriended?'
 —And when that 's told me, what 's re-
 maining?
 This world 's too hard for my explaining.
 The same wise judge of matters equine
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-
 old
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
 And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak
 wine,
 He also must be such a Lady's scorner!
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
 Now up, now down, the world 's one see-
 saw.
 —So, I shall find out some snug corner
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-
 knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world good
 night;
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's
 blowing
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us lay-
 men)
 To a world where will be no further
 throwing
 Pearls before swine that can't value them.
 Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

[1855.]

[Time—Shortly after the revival of learn-
 ing in Europe.]

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar
 thorpes,
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow:
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!
 That's the appropriate country; there,
 man's thought,
 Rarer, intenser,
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censor!
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and
 crop;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, cited to the top,
 Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit!
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the
 heights:
 Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;
 He 's for the morning!
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each
 head,
 'Ware the beholders!
 This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.
 Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe
 and croft,
 Safe from the weather!
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and
 throat,
 Lyric Apollo!
 Long he lived nameless: how should spring
 take note
 Winter would follow?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, 'New measures, other feet
 anon!
 My dance is finished?'
 No, that 's the world's way! (keep the
 mountain-side,
 Make for the city.)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with
 pride
 Over men's pity;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the
 world
 Bent on escaping:
 'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, 'thou
 keepest furled?
 Show me their shaping,
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard
 and sage,—
 Give!'—So he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last
 page:
 Learned, we found him!
 Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes
 like lead,
 Accents uncertain:
 'Time to taste life,' another would have
 said,
 'Up with the curtain!'—
 This man said rather, 'Actual life comes
 next?
 Patience a moment!
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed
 text,
 Still, there 's the comment.
 Let me know all! Prate not of most or
 least.
 Painful or easy:

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,

Aye, nor feel queasy!

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,

When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give!

Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the parts —

Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,

Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace

(Hearthen our chorus)

That before living he 'd learn how to live—

No end to learning:

Earn the means first—God surely will contrive

Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say—'But time escapes!

Live now or never?'

He said, 'What 's time? leave Now for dogs and apes!

Man has Forever.'

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:

Calculus racked him:

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:

Tussis attacked him.

'Now, Master, take a little rest!'—not he!

(Caution redoubled!

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly)

Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,

Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,

Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,

(He loves the burthen) —

God's task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear

Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment!

He ventured neck or nothing — Heaven's success

Found, or earth's failure:

'Wilt thou trust death or not?' He answered 'Yes!

Hence with life's pale lure!

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses an unit.

That, has the world here — should he need the next,

Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed

Seeking shall find Him.

So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,

Ground he at grammar;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:

While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —

Properly based *Oun* —

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,

Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:

Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,

Swallows and curlews!

Here 's the top-peak! the multitude below

Live, for they can, there.

This man decided not to Live but Know —

Bury this man there?

Here — here 's his place, where meteors

shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm,

Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,

Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

[1855.]

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,

Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:

He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
See him no other than as he is!

Give both the Infinitudes their due —
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ: plagal-cadence.*

As infinite a justice too.

ONE SINGETH

John, Master of the Temple of God,
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
He sold it to Sultan Saladin:
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing
there,

Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or
clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm
him who singeth —*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
Make a trench all round with the city
muck;

Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
Faggots not few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no
more, —

For they mean he should roast in the
sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of
all.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white
glow:

Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing 'Laudes' and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo — who bids clap-to the torch.

John of the Temple, whose fame so
bragged,

Is burning alive in Paris square!

How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
Or heave his chest, while a band goes
round?

Or threat with his fist, since his arms
are spliced?

Or kick with his feet, now his legs are
bound?

— Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus
Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself*].

Jesus Christ — John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ — John had eaten and
drunk;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)

Now it was, 'Saviour, bountiful lamb,
I have roasted Thee Turks, though men
roast me.

See Thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
Art Thou a Saviour? Save Thou me!

CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save Thou
me!

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?

— Saith, it no more means what it pro-
claims,

Than a damsel's threat to her wanton
bird? —

For she too prattles of ugly names.

— Saith, he knoweth but one thing, — what
he knows?

That God is good and the rest is breath;
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's
rose?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!

Some, honied of taste like your leman's
tongue:

Some, bitter — for why? (roast gaily on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's dung!

When Paul once reasoned of righteous-
ness

And of temperance and of judgment to
come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less —
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked
thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked
thumb?

Ha, ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!

Lo, — petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;

And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;

And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS

What maketh Heaven, That maketh Hell.

So, as John called now, through the fire
 amain,
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all
 his life—
 To the Person, he bought and sold again—
 For the Face, with his daily buffets
 rife—
 Feature by feature It took its place!
 And his voice, like a mad dog's choking
 bark,
 At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the
 dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

[1855.]

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world
 knows well,
 And a statue watches it from the square,
 And this story of both do our townsmen
 tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
 At the farthest window facing the East
 Asked, 'Who rides by with the royal air?'

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
 She leaned forth, one on either hand;
 They saw how the blush of the bride in-
 creased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
 As one at each ear and both in a breath
 Whispered, 'The Great-Duke Ferdinand.'

That selfsame instant, underneath,
 The Duke rode past in his idle way,
 Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
 Till he threw his head back—'Who is she?'
 —'A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-
 day.'

Hair in heaps lay heavily
 Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
 Carved like the heart of the coal-black
 tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encloure—
 And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
 Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
 Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
 The Duke grew straightway brave and
 wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
 She looked at him, as one who awakes,—
 The Past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
 A feast was held that selfsame night
 In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
 But the Palace overshadows one,
 Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
 Through the first republic's murder there
 By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the
 square)

Turned in the midst of his multitude
 At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
 A single minute and no more,
 While the bridegroom bent as a man sub-
 dued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
 For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
 As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
 If a word did pass, which I do not think,
 Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
 He and his bride were alone at last
 In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
 That the door she had passed was shut on
 her
 Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
 Through a certain window facing the East
 She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a
 feast,
 And a feast might lead to so much beside,
 He, of many evils, chose the least.

'Freely I choose too,' said the bride—
 'Your window and its world suffice,'
 Replied the tongue, while the heart re-
 plied—

'If I spend the night with that devil twice,
 May his window serve as my loop of hell
 Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise!

'I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
 Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
 Ere I count another ave-bell.

'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
 And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
 And I save my soul—but not to-mor-
 row'—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim) —

'My father tarries to bless my state:
I must keep it one day more for him.

'Is one day more so long to wait?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
We shall see each other, sure as fate.'

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, 'Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep.'

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled 'Twas a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours, —
A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

'What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morning's
flowers?'

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, 'Too much favour for me so mean!

'But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth:

'Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life's decline.'

Quoth the Duke, 'A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
Be our feast to-night as usual here!'

And then to himself — 'Which night shall
bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool —
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

'Yet my passion must wait a night, nor
cool —
For to-night the Envoy arrives from
France,
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my
tool.

'I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady's countenance:

'For I ride — what should I do but ride?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window — well betide!'

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit
kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day
more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth —
The rose would blow when the storm
passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's
dearth
By winter's fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain
worth!

And to press a point while these oppose
Were a simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she — she watched the square like a
book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book
was done,
And she turned from the picture at night
to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years — gleam by
gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and
love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a
dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above, —
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked —
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —
 'Summon here,' she suddenly said,
 'Before the rest of my old self pass,

'Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
 Who fashions the clay no love will change,
 And fixes a beauty never to fade.

'Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
 Arrest the remains of young and fair,
 And rivet them while the seasons range.

'Make me a face on the window there,
 Waiting as ever, mute the while,
 My love to pass below in the square!

'And let me think that it may beguile
 Dreary days which the dead must spend
 Down in their darkness under the aisle,

'To say, "What matters it at the end?
 I did no more while my heart was warm
 Than does that image, my pale-faced
 friend."

'Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
 The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
 And the blood that blues the inside arm —

'Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
 The earthly gift to an end divine?
 A lady of clay is as good, I trow.'

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine
 With flowers and fruits which leaves en-
 lace,

Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
 As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
 The passionate pale lady's face —

Eyeing ever with earnest eye
 And quick-turned neck at its breathless
 stretch,
 Some one who ever is passing by —)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest
 wretch
 In Florence, 'Youth — my dream escapes!
 Will its record stay?' And he bade them
 fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes —
 'Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
 Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

'John of Douay shall effect my plan,
 Set me on horseback here aloft,
 Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

'In the very square I have crossed so oft!
 That men may admire, when future sons
 Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

'While the mouth and the brow stay brave
 in bronze —
 Admire and say, "When he was alive,
 How he would take his pleasure once!"

'And it shall go hard but I contrive
 To listen the while and laugh in my tomb
 At idleness which aspires to strive.'

So! while these wait the trump of doom,
 How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
 Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
 What a gift life was, ages ago,
 Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
 Nor all that chivalry of His,
 The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss —
 Since, the end of life being manifest,
 He had burned his way thro' the world to
 this.

I hear you reproach, 'But delay was best,
 For their end was a crime.' — Oh, a crime
 will do
 As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
 Sufficient to vindicate itself
 And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of
 self?

Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
 To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
 As well the counter as coin, I submit,
 When your table's a hat, and your prize,
 a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
 Venture as truly, use the same skill,
 Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play! — is my principle.
 Let a man contend to the uttermost
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
 As surely as if it were lawful coin:
 And the sin I impute to each frustrate
 ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
 Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
 You of the virtue, (we issue join)
 How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

[1836.]

THE rain set early in to-night,
 The sullen wind was soon awake,
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
 And did its worst to vex the lake:
 I listened with heart fit to break.
 When glided in Porphyria; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
 Which done, she rose, and from her form
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
 And, last, she sat down by my side
 And called me. When no voice replied,
 She put my arm about her waist,
 And made her smooth white shoulder
 bare,
 And all her yellow hair displaced,
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
 And spread o'er all her yellow hair,
 Murmuring how she loved me — she
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
 To set its struggling passion free
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
 And give herself to me for ever.
 But passion sometimes would prevail,
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
 A sudden thought of one so pale
 For love of her, and all in vain;
 So, she was come through wind and rain.
 Be sure I looked up at her eyes
 Happy and proud; at last I knew
 Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
 While I debated what to do.
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good: I found
 A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
 Three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her. No pain felt she;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,
 I warily oped her lids; again
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
 And I untightened next the tress
 About her neck; her cheek once more
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
 I propped her head up as before,
 Only, this time my shoulder bore
 Her head, which droops upon it still:
 The smiling rosy little head,
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorned at once is fled,
 And I, its love, am gained instead!
 Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirred,
 And yet God has not said a word!

'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME'

(See Edgar's song in 'LEAR')

[1855.]

MY first thought was, he lied in every word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 Suppression of the glee that pursed and
 scored
 Its edge at one more victim gained
 thereby.
 What else should he be set for, with his
 staff?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, en-
 snare
 All travellers that might find him posted
 there,
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-
 like laugh
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my
 epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,
 If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquies-
 cingly
 I did turn as he pointed; neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end might
 be.
 For, what with my whole world-wide wan-
 dering,
 What with my search drawn out thro'
 years, my hope
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
 With that obstreperous joy success would
 bring, —
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
 My heart made, finding failure in its
 scope.
 As when a sick man very near to death
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and
 end
 The tears and takes the farewell of each
 friend,
 And hears one bid the other go, draw
 breath
 Freelier outside, ('since all is o'er,' he saith,
 'And the blow fallen no grieving can
 amend;')
 While some discuss if near the other graves
 Be room enough for this, and when a day
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
 With care about the banners, scarves and
 staves, —
 And still the man hears all, and only
 craves
 He may not shame such tender love and
 stay.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ

So many times among 'The Band!'—
 to wit,

The knights who to the Dark Tower's
 search addressed

Their steps—that just to fail as they,
 seemed best.

And all the doubt was now—should I
 be fit.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway
 Into the path he pointed. All the day
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
 Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
 Than, pausing to throw backward a last
 view

To the safe road, 'twas gone: grey plain
 all round:

Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
 I might go on; nought else remained to
 do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
 Such starved ignoble nature; nothing
 throve:

For flowers—as well expect a cedar
 grove!

But cockle, spurge, according to their law
 Might propagate their kind, with none to
 awe,

You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-
 trove.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
 In some strange sort, were the land's
 portion. 'See

Or shut your eyes,' said Nature peevishly,
 'It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:

'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure
 this place,

Calcine its clods and set my prisoners
 free.'

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
 Above its mates, the head was chopped
 —the bents

Were jealous else. What made those
 holes and rents

In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—bruised
 as to baulk

All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must
 walk

Pashing their life out, with a brute's in-
 tents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the
 mud

Which underneath looked kneaded up
 with blood.

One stiff-blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there:
 Thrust out past service from the devil's
 stud!

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red, gaunt and colloped neck
 a-strain,

And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
 Seldom went such grotesqueness with such
 woe;

I never saw a brute I hated so;
 He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my
 heart.

As a man calls for wine before he fights,
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier
 sights,

Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
 Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's
 art:

One taste of the old time sets all to
 rights!

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
 That way he used. Alas, one night's dis-
 grace!

Out went my heart's new fire and left it
 cold.

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he
 stands

Frank as ten years ago when knighted
 first.

What honest men should dare (he said)
 he durst.

Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what
 hangman's hands

Pin to his breast a parchment? his own
 bands

Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and
 curst!

Better this Present than a Past like that;
 Back therefore to my darkening path
 again.

No sound, no sight as far as eye could
 strain.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
 I asked: when something on the dismal flat
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change
 their train.

A sudden little river crossed my path
 As unexpected as a serpent comes.

No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
 This, as it frothed by, might have been a
 bath

For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the
 wrath

Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and
 spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! all along,
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down over
 it;
 Drenched willows flung them headlong
 in a fit
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
 The river which had done them all the
 wrong,
 Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no
 whit.

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how
 I feared
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to
 seek
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
 — It may have been a water-rat I speared,
 But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
 Now for a better country. Vain presage!
 Who were the strugglers, what war did
 they wage,
 Whose savage trample thus could pad the
 dank
 Soil to a splash? toads in a poisoned tank,
 Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage —

The fight must so have seemed in that fell
 cirque.
 What penned them there, with all the
 plain to choose?
 No footprint leading to that horrid mews,
 None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
 Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves
 the Turk
 Pits for his pastime, Christians against
 Jews.

And more than that — a furlong on — why,
 there!
 What bad use was that engine for, that
 wheel,
 Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to
 reel
 Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
 Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
 Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of
 steel.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once,
 a wood,
 Next a marsh, it would seem, and now
 mere earth
 Desperate and done with; (so a fool
 finds mirth,
 Makes a thing and then mars it, till his
 mood
 Changes and off he goes!) within a rood —
 Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark
 black dearth.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and
 grim,
 Now patches where some leanness of the
 soil's
 Broke into moss or substances like boils;
 Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
 Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
 Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

And just as far as ever from the end!
 Nought in the distance but the evening,
 nought
 To point my footstep further! At the
 thought,
 A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-
 friend,
 Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-
 penned
 That brushed my cap — perchance the
 guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given
 place
 All round to mountains — with such
 name to grace
 Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen
 in view.
 How thus they had surprised me, — solve
 it, you!
 How to get from them was no clearer
 case.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
 Of mischief happened to me, God knows
 when —
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended,
 then,
 Progress this way. When, in the very
 nick
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click
 As when a trap shuts — you're inside the
 den!

Burningly it came on me all at once,
 This was the place! those two hills on
 the right,
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in
 horn in fight;
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain
 . . . Dunce,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the sight!
 What in the midst lay but the Tower
 itself?
 The round squat turret, blind as the
 fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a coun-
 terpart
 In the whole world. The tempest's mock-
 ing elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen
 shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers
 start.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—Why,
day

Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
'Now stab and end the creature—to the
heft!'

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it
told

Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was
bold,

And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe
of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-
sides, met

To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. '*Childe Roland to the Dark
Tower came.*'

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPE-
RIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB
PHYSICIAN

[1855.]

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's
crumbs,

The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from His mouth,
man's soul)

—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress
and strain,

Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the
term,—

And aptest in contrivance, under God,
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge,
fame with peace)

Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer
still,

One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than
drugs)

And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?

I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and
bone

On many a flinty furlong of this land.

Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward:
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted
ear;

Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was
gone.

Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten
me,

And once a town declared me for a spy,
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the
night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third de-
gree

Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laugh-
est here!

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable

In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there's a spider
here

Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of
tombs,

Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey
back;

Take five and drop them . . . but who
knows his mind,

The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?

His service payeth me a sublimite

Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.

Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,

There set in order my experiences,

Gather what most deserves, and give thee
all—

Or I might add, Judaea's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-
grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease

Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at
Zoar—

But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—

Suppose I write what harms not, though he
steal?

I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,

What set me off a-writing first of all.

An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!

For, be it this town's barrenness—or else

The Man had something in the look of him—

His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.

So, pardon if — (lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole
from me)

I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,

Almost in sight — for, wilt thou have the truth?

The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania — subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three
days,

When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to
know,

The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body in-
deed, —

But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too
wide,

Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing sub-
sequent

Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawks
The just-returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or
none.

And first — the man's own firm conviction
rests

That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
— That he was dead and then restored to
life

By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
— 'Sayeth, the same bade 'Rise,' and he
did rise.

'Such cases are diurnal,' thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment! — not, that such a
fume,

Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and
all!

For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man — it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common
health

As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug

And bathe the wearied soul and worried
flesh,

And bring it clear and fair, by three days'
sleep!

Whence has the man the balm that bright-
ens all?

This grown man eyes the world now like a
child.

Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow, — told the
case, —

He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them
talk,

Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no
fool.

And that's a sample how his years must
go.

Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure, can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes
starved small

And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his
hand,

And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned
dust?

Is he not such an one as moves to mirth —
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times,
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge,
say,

Increased beyond the fleshly faculty —
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on
earth,

Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing
Heaven.

The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.

Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—

'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze
rapt

With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) — as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders

In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.

Should his child sicken unto death — why,
look

For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of his daily craft —

While a word, gesture, glance, from that
 same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like! demand
 The reason why—'tis but a word,' ob-
 ject—
 'A gesture'—he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us, dost thou mind?—when, be-
 ing young
 We both would unadvisedly recite
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of
 his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which
 ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a
 match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
 He holds on firmly to some thread of
 life—
 (It is the life to lead perforcedly)
 Which runs across some vast distracting
 orb
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter
 yet—
 The spiritual life around the earthly life!
 The law of that is known to him as this—
 His heart and brain move there, his feet
 stay here.
 So is the man perplex with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight
 on,
 Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong
 across,
 And not along, this black thread through
 the blaze—
 'It should be' balked by 'here it cannot be'.
 And off the man's soul springs into his
 face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him 'Rise' and he did
 rise.
 Something, a word, a tick of the blood
 within
 Admonishes—then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, that was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of
 life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 For that same death which must restore his
 being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul

Divorced even now by premature full
 growth:
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God
 please.
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God
 please.
 Hence I perceive not he affects to preach
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
 How can he give his neighbour the real
 ground,
 His own conviction? ardent as he is—
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
 'Be it as God please' reassureth him.
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should—
 'How, beast,' said I, 'this stolid careless-
 ness
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?'
 He merely looked with his large eyes on
 me.
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?
 Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
 Able and weak—affects the very brutes
 And birds—how say I? flowers of the
 field—
 As a wise workman recognizes tools
 In a master's workshop, loving what they
 make.
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
 Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
 An indignation which is promptly curbed:
 As when in certain travels I have feigned
 To be an ignoramus in our art
 According to some preconceived design,
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
 Prattle fantastically on disease,
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my
 peace!

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere
 this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the
 source,
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wiz-
 ardry,
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
 And creed prodigious as described to me.
 His death which happened when the earth-
 quake fell
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
 To occult learning in our lord the sage
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
 Was wrought by the mad people—that 's
 their wont—

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's
their way!

The other imputations must be lies:
But take one—though I loathe to give it
thee,

In mere respect to any good man's fame!
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he
says?)

Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me—who but God him-
self,

Creator and Sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
—'Sayeth that such an One was born and
lived,

Taught, healed the sick; broke bread at his
own house,

Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I
know,

And yet was . . . what I said nor choose
repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in
fact,

In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he
saith?

Why write of trivial matters, things of
price

Calling at every moment for remark?

I noticed on the margin of a pool

Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,

Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious care,
Which, now that I review it, needs must
seem

Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!

Nor I myself discern in what is writ

Good cause for the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me
with.

Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him
thus:

I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken
hills

Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there
came

A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing:

Then a wind rose behind me. So we met

In this old sleepy town at unaware,

The man and I. I send thee what is writ.

Regard it as a chance, a matter risked

To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,

Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.

Jerusalem's repose shall make amends

For time this letter wastes, thy time and
mine;
Till when, once more thy pardon and fare-
well!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou
think?

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving
too—

So, through the thunder comes a human
voice

Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!

Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.

Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of
Mine,

But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me who have died
for thee!

The madman saith: He said so: it is strange.

PICTOR IGNOTUS

[FLORENCE, 15—]

[1845.]

I COULD have painted pictures like that
youth's

Ye praise so. How my soul springs up!
No bar

Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens
while it soothes!

—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift

Of fires from God: nor would my flesh
have shrunk

From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like

thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around

Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound.

Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,

Over the canvas could my hand have
flung,

Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a

tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood.

A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her

brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its

place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,

And locked the mouth fast, like a castle
braved,—

O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not

saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how

well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—

forth,

As, making new hearts beat and bosoms
swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or
North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the
freight,
Through old streets named afresh from
its event,
Till it reached home, where learned Age
should greet
My face, and Youth, the star not yet
distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should
end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger
here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my
friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so
wildly dear!
But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such
sights
Have scared me, like the revels through
a door
Of some strange House of Idols at its
rites;
This world seemed not the world it was
before:
Mixed with my loving trusting ones there
trooped
. . . Who summoned those cold faces
that begun
To press on me and judge me? Though I
stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . .
enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take
and give,
Count them for garniture and household-
stuff,
And where they live our pictures needs
must live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of—"This I love, or this I hate,
This likes me more, and this affects me
less!"
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at
whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe and
Saint,
With the same cold, calm, beautiful re-
gard,
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures
stand apart:

Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle-
smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's traver-
tine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never
woke.
So die, my pictures; surely, gently die!
Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their
praise its worth?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden
cry?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks
of earth?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

[1855.]

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what 's to blame? you think you
see a monk!
What, it 's past midnight, and you go the
rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors
ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your
zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong
hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white
mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him com-
pany!
Aha, you know your betters? Then, you'll
take
Your hand away that 's fiddling on my
throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am
I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . .
how d'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
In the house that caps the corner. Boh!
you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're
hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your
knaves *different me*.
Pick up a manner nor discredit you.
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep
the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their
net? *an artist, not angry*
He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make
amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hang-dogs
go

Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads! more
beside!)

And all 's come square again. I'd like his
face—

His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave
that holds

John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ('look you, now,' as who
should say)

And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like
enough!

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let 's sit and set things straight now, hip
to haunch.

Here 's spring come, and the nights one
makes up bands

To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my
mew,

A-painting for the great man, saints and
saints *in order of Rev.*

And saints again. I could not paint all
night—

Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs
of song,—

Flower o' the broom, *Stornelli*

Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!

Flower o' the quince,

I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?

Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round
they went.

Scarce had they turned the corner when
a titter

Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,
—three slim shapes,

And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir,
flesh and blood,

That 's all I'm made of! Into shreds it
went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and
so dropped,

And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well
met,—

Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?

And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work

On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the
flesh, *domestic content*

You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake
your head—

Mine 's shaved,—a monk, you say—the
sting 's in that!

If Master Cosimo announced himself, *refused*
Mum 's the word naturally; but a monk! *soft*

Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now! *life*
I was a baby when my mother died *his*

And father died and left me in the street.

I starved there, God knows how, a year or
two

On fig skins, melon-parings, rinds and
shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,

The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one
hand,

(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,

By the straight cut to the convent. Six
words, there,

While I stood munching my first bread
that month:

'So, boy, you're minded,' quoth the good
fat father

Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-
time,—

'To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce' . . . The mouthful of
bread? thought I;

By no means! Brief, they made a monk
of me;

I did renounce the world, its pride and
greed,

Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-
house,

Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight
years old.

Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful.

The warm serge and the rope that goes all
round,

And day-long blessed idleness beside!

'Let 's see what the urchin 's fit for'—that
came next.

Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! they tried me with their
books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure
waste!

Flower o' the clove.

All the Latin I construe is, 'amo' I love!

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the
streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was
Watching folk's faces to know who will
fling

training in observation

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,

And who will curse or kick him for his pains —

Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament

Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,

Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, —

How say I? — nay, which dog bites, which lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the street, —

Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,

He learns the look of things, and none the less

For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.

I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use:

I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphony's marge,

Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,

Found nose and eyes and chin for A's and B's,

And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,

On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.

'Nay,' quoth the Prior, 'turn him out, d'ye say?

In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.

What if at 'last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese

And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine

And put the front on it that ought to be!

And hereupon they bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, their walls a blank,

Never was such prompt disembodying.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,

I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,

From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their ribs of barrel-droppings, candle-

ends, —

To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row

Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son

Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of

Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this

After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,

(Which the intense eyes looked through)
came at eve

On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of

flowers

(The brute took growling), prayed, and so
was gone.

I painted all, then cried 'Tis ask and have —
Choose, for more 's ready!' — laid the lad-

der flat,

And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.

The monks closed in a circle and praised
loud

Till checked, — taught what to see and not
to see,

Being simple bodies, — 'That 's the very
man!

Look at the boy who stoops to pat the
dog!

That woman 's like the Prior's niece who
comes

To care about his asthma: it 's the life!

But there my triumph 's straw-fire flared
and finked —

Their betters took their turn to see and
say:

The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. 'How?

what 's here?

Quite from the mark of painting, bless us
all!

Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it 's devil's-

game!

Your business is not to catch men with
show,

With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,

Make them forget there 's such a thing as
flesh.

Your business is to paint the souls of
men —

Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . .
no it 's not . . .

It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe —
(In that shape when you die it leaves your

mouth)

It 's . . . well, what matters talking, it 's
the soul!

Give us no more of body than shows
soul!

Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising
God,

That sets you praising, — why not stop with
him?

Why put all thoughts of praise out of our
heads

With wonder at lines, colours, and what
not?

little of false idealism

Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!

Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,

She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—

Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off—

Have it all out! Now, is this sense, I ask?

A fine way to paint soul, by painting body So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further

And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white

When what you put for yellow's simply black,

And any sort of meaning looks intense

When all beside itself means and looks nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,

Left foot and right foot, go a double step,

Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,

Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,

The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty

You can't discover if it means hope, fear, Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?

Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,

Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,

And then add soul and heighten them threefold?

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—

(I never saw it—put the case the same—)

If you get simple beauty and nought else, You get about the best thing God invents:

That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,

Within yourself when you return Him thanks.

'Rub all out!' Well, well, there's my life, in short.

And so the thing has gone on ever since. I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds—

You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls.

I'm my own master, paint now as I please—

Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!

Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—

Realistic touch

Those great rings serve more purposes than just

To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!

And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes

Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work, The heads shake still—'It's Art's decline, my son!

You're not of the true painters, great and old;

Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;

Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:

Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!

Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!

I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!

Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,

They with their Latin? so, I swallow my rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint

To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't,

For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come

A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—

(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,

The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at, In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.

What would men have? Do they like grass or no—

May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing

Settled for ever one way: as it is,

You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.

You don't like what you only like too much,

You do like what, if given you at your word,

You find abundantly detestable.

For me, I think I speak as I was taught—

I always see the Garden and God there A-making man's wife—and, my lesson learned,

The value and significance of flesh, I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

aphor-
ism

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now — why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star 's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a young-
ster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom
drop —

His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the
monks—

They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them
talk—

He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be
judge!

You speak no Latin more than I, belike—
However, you're my man, you've seen the
world

—The beauty and the wonder and the
power,

The shapes of things, their colours, lights
and shades,

Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!

—For what? do you feel thankful, aye or
no,

For this fair town's face, yonder river's
line,

The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman,
child,

These are the frame to? What 's it all
about?

To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—
you say.

But why not do as well as say,—paint
these

Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it
crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, 'His
works

Are here already—nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you
can't)

There 's no advantage! you must beat her,
then.'

For, don't you mark, we're made so that
we love

First when we see them painted, things we
have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to
see;

And so they are better, painted—better to
us,

Which is the same thing. Art was given
for that—

God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed,
now,

Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of
chalk,

And trust me but you should, though!

How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same
truth!

That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall
do

And we in our graves! This world 's
no blot for us,

Nor blank—it means intensely, and means
good:

To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
'Aye, but you don't so instigate to prayer!'

Strikes in the Prior: 'when your meaning's
plain

It does not say to folks—remember
matins,

Or, mind you fast next Friday.' Why, for
this

What need of art at all? A skull and
bones,

Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or,
what 's best,

A bell to chime the hour with, does as
well.

I painted a Saint Laurence six months
since

At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
'How looks my painting, now the scaffold's
down?'

I ask a brother: 'Hugely,' he returns—

'Already not one phiz of your three slaves
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But 's scratched and prodded to our heart's
content,

The pious people have so eased their own
When coming to say prayers there in a
rage:

We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time—next year,

For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!' Hang
the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle
word

Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which
turns

The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me,
now!

It 's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse him-
self:

And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece

... There 's for you! Give me six
months, then go, see

Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the
nuns!

They want a cast of my office. I shall
paint

now B. describes
Lippo's masterpiece
an amazingly vivid
description.

God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces,
sweet

As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to church at mid-
summer.

And then in the front, of course a saint
or two—

Saint John, because he saves the Floren-
tines,

Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black
and white

The convent's friends and gives them a long
day,

And Job, I must have him there past mis-
take,

The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all
these

Secured at their devotions, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,

As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I'm
the man!

Back I shrink—what is this I see and
hear?

I, caught up with my monk's things by
mistake,

My old serge gown and rope that goes all
round,

I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where 's a hole, where 's a corner for
escape?

Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a
thing

Forward, puts out a soft palm—'Not so
fast!'

—Addresses the celestial presence, 'nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,

Though he 's none of you! Could Saint
John there, draw—

His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,

Iste perfect opus! So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face

Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when

you're gay

And play hot cockles, all the doors being
shut,

Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off

To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing

That spoke the good word for me in the
nick,

Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I
would say.

And so all 's saved for me, and for the
church

A pretty picture gained. Go, six months
hence!

Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights,
no lights!

The street 's hushed, and I know my own
way back,

Don't fear me! There 's the grey begin-
ning. Zooks!

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED 'THE FAULTLESS PAINTER')

[1855.]

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:

Sit down and all shall happen as you
wish.

You turn your face, but does it bring your
heart?

I'll work then for your friend's friend,
never fear,

Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own

price,
And shut the money into this small hand

When next it takes mine. Will it? ten-
derly?

Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow.
Love!

I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it

seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me

sit
Here by the window with your hand in

mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,

Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,

I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.

To-morrow how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,

And mine the man's bared breast she curls
inside.

Don't count the time lost, either; you must
serve

For each of the five pictures we require—
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—

My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect

ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—

My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,

And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no

less!

You smile? why, there 's my picture ready
made.

There 's what we painters call our har-
mony!

A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike

—You, at the point of your first pride in me

(That's gone, you know),—but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 How strange now, looks the life He makes us lead!
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
 I feel He laid the fetter: let it lie!
 This chamber for example—turn your head—
 All that's behind us! you don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art;
 But you can hear at least when people speak;
 And that cartoon, the second from the door—
 —It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
 Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
 I can do with my pencil what I know,
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
 Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
 I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past—
 I do what many dream of all their lives
 —Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter) so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.

Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself,
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken—what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that?
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
 Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey
 Placid and perfect with my art—the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain—
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 'Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!' No doubt.
 Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago.
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art—for it gives way;
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch
 Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird

The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—

Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!

Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged

'God and the glory! never care for gain. The Present by the Future, what is that?

Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!'

I might have done it for you. So it seems—Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.

Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;

The rest afraid not. Why do I need you? What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?

In this world, who can do a thing, will not—

And who would do it, cannot, I perceive: Yet the will 's somewhat—somewhat, too,

the power—

And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,

God, I conclude, compensates, punishes. 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here, Poor this long while, despised, to speak

the truth.

I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,

For fear of chancing on the Paris lords. The best is when they pass and look aside;

But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.

Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,

And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! I surely then could sometimes leave the

ground,

Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear, In that humane great monarch's golden

look,—

One finger in his beard or twisted curl Over his mouth's good mark that made

the smile,

One arm about my shoulder, round my neck, The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,

I painting proudly with his breath on me, All his court round him, seeing with his

eyes,

Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls

Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—

And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond, This in the background, waiting on my

work,

To crown the issue with a last reward! A good time, was it not, my kingly days?

And had you not grown restless—but I know—

'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;

Too live the life grew, golden and not grey, And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should

tempt

Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.

How could it end in any other way? You called me, and I came home to your

heart.

The triumph was, to have ended there; then if

I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost? Let my hands frame your face in your

hair's gold,

You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine! 'Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—

The Roman's is the better when you pray, But still the other's Virgin was his wife—

Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge Both pictures in your presence; clearer

grows

My better fortune, I resolve to think. For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,

Said one day Angelo, his very self, To Rafael . . . I have known it all these

years . . .

(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts

Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see, Too lifted up in heart because of it)

'Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub Goes up and down our Florence, none

cares how,

Who, were he set to plan and execute As you are, pricked on by your popes and

kings,

Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!

To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare—yet, only you to see, Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line

should go!

Aye, but the soul! he 's Rafael! rub it out! Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,

(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo? Do you forget already words like those?)

If really there was such a chance, so lost,—Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more

pleased.

Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!

This hour has been an hour! Another smile?

If you would sit thus by me every night I should work better, do you comprehend?

I mean that I should earn more, give you more.

See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star; Morello 's gone, the watch-lights show

the wall,

The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.

Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,

Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me. Oft at
 nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired
 out,
 The walls become illumined, brick from
 brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright
 gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
 Must see you—you, and not with me?
 Those loans?
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for
 that?
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to
 spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a
 heart
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's
 it worth?
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The grey remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in
 France,
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's
 face,
 Not yours this time! I want you at my
 side
 To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor,
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there,
 there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove
 enough
 To pay for this same Cousin's freaks.
 Beside,
 What's better and what's all I care about,
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what
 does he,
 The Cousin! what does he to please you
 more?
 I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
 I regret little, I would change still less.
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 And built this house and sinned, and all is
 said.
 My father and my mother died of want.
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his
 lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor
 they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time

And not been paid profusely. Some good
 son
 Paint my two hundred pictures—let him
 try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a
 balance. Yes.
 You loved me quite enough, it seems to-
 night.
 This must suffice me here. What would
 one have?
 In Heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more
 chance—
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
 To cover—the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So—still they over-
 come
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.
 Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

[ROME, 15.—]

[1845.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
 Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping
 back?
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know
 not! Well—
 She, men would have to be your mother
 once,
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
 What's done is done, and she is dead
 beside,
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,
 And thence ye may perceive the world's
 a dream.
 Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
 Hours and long hours in the dead night,
 I ask
 'Do I live, am I dead?' Peace, peace seems
 all.
 Saint Praxed's ever was the church for
 peace;
 And so, about this tomb of mine, I
 fought *charge & spirit*
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye
 know:
 —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my
 care;
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the cor-
 ner
 South
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the
 same!
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but
 thence
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,

Chained hummer. Bishop (then priest) saved gold mosaic, & buried it in his own tomb. Now tells her sons. Note the figures.

ROBERT BROWNING

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And somewhat of the choir, those silent
seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two
and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm
stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty
pulse.
— Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True
peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my
church
— What then? So much was saved if
ought were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go
dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-
press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sinks,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not,
I!
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Bright as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast. . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my
knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both His
hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and
burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How
else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come be-
neath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and
perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment
off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper
thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye
hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp

Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy traver-
tine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles
at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I
grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the
world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manu-
scripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly
limbs?
— That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every
word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his
need!
And then how I shall lie through cen-
turies,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-
smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone
can point,
And let the bedclothes for a mortcloth
drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-
work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange
thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and
Priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking
eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as
day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, dis-
creet,
— Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas: will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my
soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished
frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my
vase

*spirit of Rev. Does not allow
to crowd the diamond (Gibson)*

*white
art
church
house*

With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus
down,

To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
'Do I live, am I dead?' There, leave me,
there!

For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it!
Stone—

Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares
which sweat

As if the corpse they keep were oozing
through—

And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Aye, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church
for peace,

That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

CLEON

'As certain also of your own poets have said'—
[1855.]

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave
lisps 'Greece')—
To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at
last

And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group
dispersed

Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-
work

Pavement, at once my nation's work and
gift,

Now covered with this settle-down of
(doves),

One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white
hands

Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its
joy,

Thy recognition of the use of life;

Nor call thy spirit barely adequate

To help on life in straight ways, broad
enough

For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of
toil,

Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good
acclaim

Climbed with the eye to cheer the archi-
tect,—

Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's
sake—

Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,

Whence, all the tumult of the building
hushed,

Thou first of men mightst look out to the
East:

The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the
sun.

For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,
speak

Thy great words, and describe thy royal
face—

Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the
most,

Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me
here.

It is as thou hast heard: in one short
life

I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.

That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,

So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their
nets.

The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is
mine;

The Poecile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine
too.

I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;

And I have written three books on the
soul,

Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.

For music,—why, I have combined the
moods,

Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognize,

Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel
not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more com-
posite,

Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,

One mind-point, and no other at a time,—

Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way — not ours, nor meant for
ours;

And ours is greater, had we skill to know.
For, what we call this life of men on
earth,

This sequence of the soul's achievements
here,

Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually

As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all, —
How shall a certain part, pronounced com-
plete,

Endure effacement by another part?

Was the thing done? — Then, what 's to do
again?

See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,

And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid —

He did not overlay them, superimpose

The new upon the old and blot it out,

But laid them on a level in his work,

Making at last a picture; there it lies.

So, first the perfect separate forms were
made,

The portions of mankind — and after, so,

Occurred the combination of the same.

Or where had been a progress, otherwise?

Mankind, made up of all the single men, —

In such a synthesis the labour ends.

Now, mark me — those divine men of old
time

Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one
point

The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more
than reach?

It takes but little water just to touch

At some one point the inside of a sphere,

And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the
rest

In due succession: but the finer air

Which not so palpably nor obviously,

Though no less universally, can touch

The whole circumference of that emptied
sphere,

Fills it more fully than the water did;

Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.

And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height — and after, void;

Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to

Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in our life —

Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?

Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction
out,

That he or other God, descended here

And, once for all, showed simultaneously

What, in its nature, never can be shown

Piecemeal or in succession; — showed, I
say,

The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of
time,

His instruments for all appointed work.

I now go on to image, — might we hear

The judgment which should give the due to
each,

Show where the labour lay and where the
ease,

And prove Zeus' self, the latent, every-
where!

This is a dream. But no dream, let us
hope,

That years and days, the summers and
the springs

Follow each other with unwaning powers;
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer
far

Through culture, than the wild wealth of
the rock;

The suave plum than the savage-tasted
drupe;

The pastured honey-bee drops choicer
sweet;

The flowers turn double, and the leaves
turn flowers;

That young and tender crescent-moon, thy
slave,

Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,

Refines upon the women of my youth.

What, and the soul alone deteriorates?

I have not chanted verse like Homer's,
no —

Nor swept string like Terpander, no —
nor carved

And painted men like Phidias and his
friend:

I am not great as they are, point by point:
But I have entered into sympathy

With these four, running these into one
soul,

Who, separate, ignored each other's arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?

The wild flower was the larger — I have
dashed

Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its
cup's

Honey with wine, and driven its seed to
fruit,

And show a better flower if not so large.
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods

Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I
dare

(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my

hand,

Discourse of lightly or depreciate?

It might have fallen to another's hand —
what then?

I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.

This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)

I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life.
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand.

Whether I fear death less than dost thyself

The fortunate of men. 'For' (writest thou)

'Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought:

Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
The pictures men shall study; while my life,

Complete and whole now in its power and joy.

Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,
Set on the promontory which I named.

And that—some supple courtier of my heir
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,

To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.

I go, then: triumph thou, who dost not go!

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,

That admiration grows as knowledge grows?

That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the aftertime?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived.

Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee

'Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
Do more for visible creatures than is done?'
Thou wouldst have answered, 'Aye, by making each

Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,

The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims

And slides, the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,

Till life's mechanics can no further go—
And all this joy in natural life is put
Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
So exquisitely perfect is the same.
But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are;

It has them, not they it: and so I choose
For man, Thy last premeditated work
(If I might add a glory to the scheme)
That a third thing should stand apart from both,

A quality arise within the soul,
Which, intro-active, made to supervise
And feel the force it has, may view itself,
And so be happy.' Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know

Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:

'Let progress end at once,—man make no step

Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
Using his senses, not the sense of sense.'
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and unconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,

And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.

This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,

Which whole surrounding flats of natural life

Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. 'But alas!
The soul now climbs it just to perish there!

For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—

We know this, which we had not else perceived)

That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,

Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, 'Take no jot more

Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!

Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought

Deduction to it.' We struggle—fain to enlorge

Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,
It skills not: life 's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.

What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,

And mock her with my leave to take the same?

The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots

To know she might spout oceans if she could?

She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread,
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,

'See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
That I may be still happier—for thy use!
If this were so, we could not thank our

Lord,
As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?

Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—

And get no answer: and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—

Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.

What? dost thou verily trip upon a word.
Confound the accurate view of what joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)

With feeling joy? confound the knowing how

And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise

Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display

How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—

Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?

Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove

How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:

But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.

Yon rower with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.

I can write love-odes—thy fair slave 's an ode.

I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,

The muscles all a-ripple on his back.

I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art king!

'But,' sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,

To find thee tripping on a mere word)
'what

Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not die:

Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
And Æschylus, because we read his plays!

Why, if they live still, let them come and take

Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,

Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?

Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy

Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged,

more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,

My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—

The horror quickening still from year to year,

The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least

enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my

worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's

mouthing,
Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,

I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so overmuch,

Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need

Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability

For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:

That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait

On purpose to make prized the life at large—

Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death

We burst there as the worm into the fly,

Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.
But, no!

Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought
die,
Glad for what was. Farewell. And for
the rest,

I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus—we have heard his
fame

Indeed, if Christ be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all.
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may
write.

Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached
him and Christ;

And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane
man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

[1842.]

I

I know a Mount, the gracious Sun per-
ceives

First when he visits, last, too, when he
leaves

The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of
snow.

And underneath the Mount, a Flower I
know,

He cannot have perceived, that changes
ever

At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the
grace

Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh
ones vie,

Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sport-
ively.

II

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
— The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

III

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go! Saying ever as thou dost proceed
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men
feed

On songs I sing, and therefore bask the
bees

On my flower's breast as on a platform
broad:

But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this,
Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE*

TO E. B. B.

London, September, 1855

I

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me to-
gether:

Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but One,
the volume.

Who that one, you ask? Your heart in-
structs you.

Did she live and love it all her lifetime?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a
painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a
poet's?

III

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Ma-
donnas—

Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,

*Originally appended to the collection of Poems
called 'Men and Women,' the greater portion of
which has now been, more correctly, distributed
under the other titles of this volume.

Her, that 's left with lilies in the Louvre —
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved
it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, 'Ours —
the treasure!'
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper 'Beatrice.'
While he mused and traced it and retraced
it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped
for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the
wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its
stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing
rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Flor-
ence) —
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel, —
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he — 'Certain people of importance'
(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)
'Entered and would seize, forsooth, the
poet.'
Says the poet — 'Then I stopped my paint-
ing.'

VI

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not? — than read a fresh In-
ferno.

VII

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those 'people of importance':
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs
not
Once, and only once, and for One only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —
Using nature that 's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that 's turned his
nature.
Aye, of all the artists living, loving,

None but would forgo his proper dowry, —
Does he paint? he fain would write a
poem, —

Does he write? he fain would paint a pic-
ture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for One only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's
abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the
water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath
him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal
Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked — 'Shall smit-
ing help us?'
When they drank and sneered — 'A stroke
is easy!'
When they wiped their mouths and went
their journey,
Throwing him for thanks — 'But drought
was pleasant.'
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious some-
what;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the man-
date,
Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed
faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed
prelude —
'How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and
save us?'
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —
'Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was
better.'

X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven bril-
liance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial
fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI

Did he love one face from out the thou-
sands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and
wifely,
Were she but the Aethiopian bond-slave.)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water

Meant to save his own life in the desert:
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoarded and life together for his mistress.

XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you
statues,
Make you music that should all-express
me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing—
All the gifts from all the heights, your
own, Love!

XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must
seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last
time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-
brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little.
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe
thro' silver,
Fittingly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service.
Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a
poem.

Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours — the rest be all
men's,

Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this
sentence —

Pray you, look on these my men and wo-
men,

Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all
things.

XV

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's
self!

Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-trans-
figured.

Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,

Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-
breadth.

Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-
roofs,

Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI

What, there 's nothing in the moon note-
worthy?

Nay — for if that moon could love a mor-
tal,

Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steers-
man —

Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him,
even!

Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mor-
tal —

When she turns round, comes again in
heaven,

Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an ice-
berg

Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered
crystals?

Proves she as the paved-work of a sap-
phire

Seen by Moses when he climbed the moun-
tain?

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-
work,

When they ate and drank and saw God
also!

XVII

What were seen? None knows, none ever
shall know.

Only this is sure — the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in
Florence,

Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of His crea-
tures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world
with,

One to show a woman when he loves her.

XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you — yourself my moon of poets!

Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's
 the wonder,
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they
 know you.
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise
 you,
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
 But the best is when I glide from out them.
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
 Come out on the other side, the novel
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
 Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it,
 Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom!
 R. B.

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON
 THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS
 INVENTION)
 [1864.]

Would that the structure brave, the mani-
 fold music I build.

Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys
 to their work,

Claiming each slave of the sound, at a
 touch, as when Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of
 demons that lurk,

Man, brute, reptile, fly, — alien of end and
 of aim,

Adverse, each from the other heaven-
 high, hell-deep removed, —

Should rush into sight at once as he named
 the ineffable Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to pleas-
 ure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beau-
 tiful building of mine,

This which my keys in a crowd pressed
 and importuned to raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dis-
 part now and now combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their
 master his praise!

And one would bury his brow with a blind
 plunge down to hell,

Burrow awhile and build, broad on the
 roots of things,

Then up again swim into sight, having
 based me my palace well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the
 nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like
 the excellent minion he was,

Aye, another and yet another, one crowd
 but with many a crest,

Raising my rampired walls of gold as
 transparent as glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place
 to the rest:

For higher still and higher (as a runner
 tips with fire,

When a great illumination surprises a
 festal night —

Outlining round and round Rome's dome
 from space to spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the
 pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was
 certain, to match man's birth,

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an im-
 pulse as I;

And the emulous heaven yearned down,
 made effort to reach the earth,

As the earth had done her best, in my
 passion, to scale the sky:

Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar
 and dwelt with mine,

Not a point nor peak but found and fixed
 its wandering star;

Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did
 not pale nor pine,

For earth had attained to heaven, there
 was no more near nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who
 walked in the glare and glow,

Presences plain in the place; or, fresh
 from the Protoplast,

Furnished for ages to come, when a kind-
 lier wind should blow,

Lured now to begin and live, in a house
 to their liking at last;

Or else the wonderful Dead who have
 passed through the body and gone,

But were back once more to breathe in
 an old world worth their new:

What never had been, was now; what was,
 as it shall be anon;

And what is, — shall I say, matched both?
 for I was made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds
 to a wish of my soul,

All through my soul that praised as its
 wish flowed visibly forth,

All through music and me! For think, had
 I painted the whole,

Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the
 process so wonder-worth:

Had I written the same, made verse — still,
 effect proceeds from cause,

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear
 how the tale is told;

It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience
 to laws,

Painter and poet are proud in the artist-
 list enrolled: —

But here is the finger of God, a flash of
 the will that can,
 Existent behind all laws, that made them
 and, lo, they are!
 And I know not if, save in this, such gift
 be allowed to man,
 That out of three sounds he frame, not
 a fourth sound, but a star.
 Consider it well: each tone of our scale in
 itself is nought;
 It is everywhere in the world — loud, soft,
 and all is said:
 Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in
 my thought;
 And, there! Ye have heard and seen:
 consider and bow the head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music
 I reared;
 Gone! and the good tears start, the
 praises that come too slow;
 For one is assured at first, one scarce can
 say that he feared,
 That he even gave it a thought, the gone
 thing was to go.
 Never to be again! But many more of the
 kind
 As good, nay, better perchance: is this
 your comfort to me?
 To me, who must be saved because I cling
 with my mind
 To the same, same self, same love, same
 God: aye, what was shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the
 ineffable Name?
 Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not
 made with hands!
 What, have fear of change from Thee who
 art ever the same?
 Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart
 that Thy power expands?
 There shall never be one lost good! What
 was, shall live as before;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence im-
 plying sound;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for
 evil, so much good more;
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the
 heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed
 of good, shall exist;
 Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty,
 nor good, nor power
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each sur-
 vives for the melodist
 When eternity affirms the conception of
 an hour.
 The high that proved too high, the heroic
 for earth too hard,
 The passion that left the ground to lose
 itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and
 the bard;
 Enough that He heard it once: we shall
 hear it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a tri-
 umph's evidence
 For the fullness of the days? Have we
 withered or agonized?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but
 that singing might issue thence?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that
 harmony should be prized?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow
 to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of
 the weal and woe:
 But God has a few of us whom He whis-
 pers in the ear;
 The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we
 musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes
 her reign:
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly
 acquiesce.
 Give me the keys. I feel for the common
 chord again,
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the
 minor, — yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on
 alien ground,
 Surveying a while the heights I rolled
 from into the deep;
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for
 my resting-place is found,
 The C Major of this life: so, now I
 will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

[1864.]

I

Grow old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was
 made:
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith 'A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,
 nor be afraid!'

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed 'Which rose make ours,
 Which lily leave and then as best recall?'
 Not that, admiring stars,
 It yearned 'Nor Jove, nor Mars;
 Mine be some figured flame which blends,
 transcends them all!'

III

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a
 spark.

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
 Were man but formed to feed
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
 Such feasting ended, then
 As sure an end to men;
 Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt
 the maw-crammed beast?

V

Rejoice we are allied
 To That which doth provide
 And not partake, effect and not receive!
 A spark disturbs our clod;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take,
 I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but
 go!
 Be our joys three-parts pain!
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never
 grieve the throe!

VII

For thence, — a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks, —
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
 What I aspired to be,
 And was not, comforts me:
 A brute I might have been, but would not
 sink i' the scale

VIII

What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs
 want play?
 To man, propose this test —
 Thy body at its best,
 How far can that project thy soul on its
 lone way?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use:
 I own the Past profuse
 Of power each side, perfection every turn:
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,
 Brain treasured up the whole;
 Should not the heart beat once 'How good
 to live and learn?'

X

Not once beat 'Praise be Thine!
 I see the whole design,
 I, who saw Power, see now Love perfect
 too:
 Perfect I call Thy plan:
 Thanks that I was a man!
 Maker, remake, complete, — I trust what
 Thou shalt do!

XI

For pleasant is this flesh;
 Our soul in its rose-mesh
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for
 rest:
 Would we some prize might hold
 To match those manifold
 Possessions of the brute, — gain most, as
 we did best!

XII

Let us not always say
 'Spite of this flesh to-day
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon
 the whole!'
 As the bird wings and sings,
 Let us cry 'All good things
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,
 than flesh helps soul!'

XIII

Therefore I summon age
 To grant youth's heritage,
 Life's struggle having so far reached its
 term:
 Thence shall I pass, approved
 A man, for ay removed
 From the developed brute; a God though
 in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
 Take rest, ere I be gone
 Once more on my adventure brave and
 new:
 Fearless and unperplexed,
 When I wage battle next,
 What weapons to select, what armour to
 indue.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
 My gain or loss thereby;
 Be the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
 And I shall weigh the same,
 Give life its praise or blame:
 Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know,
 being old.

XVI

For note, when evening shuts,
 A certain moment cuts
 The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
 A whisper from the west
 Shoots — 'Add this to the rest,
 Take it and try its worth: here dies an-
 other day.'

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
'This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved
the Past.'

XVIII

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the
tools' true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught
found made;
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age; wait death
nor be afraid!

XX

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand
thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let
thee feel alone.

XXI

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give
us peace at last!

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall
my soul believe?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work,' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had
the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value
in a trice:

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled
the man's amount:

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and
escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the
pitcher shaped.

XXVI

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our
clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
'Since life fleets, all is change; the Past
gone, seize to-day!'

XXVII

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand
sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter
and clay endure.

XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain
arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently
impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and
press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner
stress?

XXX

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trump-
pet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what
needst thou with earth's wheel?

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men;
And since, not even while the whirl was
worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake
Thy thirst:

XXXII

So, take and use Thy work!
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings
past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death com-
plete the same!

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS;

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an
one as thyself.'

[1864.]

[WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is
best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his
chin;
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool
slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things
course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him
laugh;
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and
beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and
crunch:
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams
cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at
times),
And talks to his own self, howe'er he
please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called
God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes — ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is
now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and
gibe
Letting the rank tongue blossom into
speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!

'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the
moon.

'Thinketh, He made it, with the sun to
match,

But not the stars; the stars came other-
wise;

Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as
that:

Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the
same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where
she lived,

And thaw herself within the lukewarm
brine

O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of
wave;

Only she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the
sun)

Flounced back from bliss she was not born
to breathe,

And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this
isle,

Trees and the fowls here, beast and creep-
ing thing.

Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger
brown

He hath watched hunt with that slant
white-wedge eye

By moonlight; and the pie with the long
tongue

That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her
prize,

But will not eat the ants; the ants them-
selves

That build a wall of seeds and settled
stalks

About their hole—He made all these and
more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how
else?

He could not, Himself, make a second
self

To be His mate; as well have made Him-
self.

He would not make what He mislikes or
slights,

An eyesore to Him, or not worth His
pains;

*Attaching self
predetermination
on which Jones was
brought up.*

But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a man-
ner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the
while,
Things He admires and mocks too,—that
is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they
be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and
kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up
all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through
my brain;
And throw me on my back i' the seeded
thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath
wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din.
Saucy through their veined wings, and
mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle
clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should
laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or
else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the manikin three legs for his
one.
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an
egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely
clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become
alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.
'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong
in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and
Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder
crabs
That march now from the mountain to the
sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,

Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple
spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a
worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in
red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.
Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the
main,
Placable if His mind and ways were
guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than
Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do
more
Than He who made them! What consoles
but this?
That they, unless through Him, do nought
at all,
And must submit: what other use in
things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the
scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the
feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the
jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe
is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast
forsooth
'I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
I make the cry my maker cannot make
With his great round mouth; he must blow
through mine!
Would not I smash it with my foot? So
He.
But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at
ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and
fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing,
perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His
head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor
grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some
way.
I joy because the quails come; would not
joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a
mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch.

*Below of course
whole section of bird's pleasure.*

*that Caliban
would be
more kind*

But never spends much thought nor care
that way.

It may look up, work up, — the worse for
those

It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos

The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through what
He does,

Looks up, first, and perceives He cannot
soar

To what is quiet and hath happy life;

Next looks down here, and out of very
spite

Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips
do grapes.

'Tis solace making baubles, aye, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his
books

Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves,
arrow-shaped,

Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious
words;

Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe

The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling
mole,

A four-legged serpent he makes cower and
couch,

Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind
his eye,

And saith she is Miranda and my wife:

'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight dis-

gorge;

Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he
snared,

Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat
tame,

And split its toe-webs, and now pens the
drudge

In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart, that bides its time and
bites.

'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taket his mirth with make-believes: so

He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all
things

Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He
might vex.

Had He meant other, while His hand was
in,

Why not make horny eyes no thorn could
prick,

Or plate my scalp with bone against the
snow,

Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and
joint,

Like an orc's armour? Aye, — so spoil
His sport!

He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits
Him.

Aye, himself loves what does him good;
but why?

'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded
beast

Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but
hate

Or love, just as it liked him: He hath
eyes.

Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much
craft,

By no means for the love of what is
worked.

'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the
world

When all goes right, in this safe summer-
time,

And he wants little, hungers, aches not
much,

Than trying what to do with wit and
strength.

'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile
of turfs,

And squared and stuck there squares of
soft white chalk,

And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon
on each,

And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's
skull a-top,

Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one
to kill.

No use at all i' the work, for work's sole
sake;

'Shall some day knock it down again: so
He.

'Saith he is terrible: watch His feats in
proof!

One hurricane will spoil six good months'
hope.

He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows
why?

So it is, all the same, as well I find.

'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them
firm

With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one
wave,

Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large
tongue,

And licked the whole labour flat: so much
for spite.

'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)

Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
 Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
 'Dug up a newt he may have envied once
 And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
 Please Him and hinder this? — What Prosper does?
 Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
 There is the sport: discover how or die!
 All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
 Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;
 Those at His mercy, — why, they please Him most
 When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!
 Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
 You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
 Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:
 'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
 But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,
 And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:
 'Spareth an urchin that, contrariwise,
 Curls up into a ball, pretending death
 For fright at my approach: the two ways please.
 But what would move my choler more than this,
 That either creature counted on its life
 To-morrow and next day and all days to come,
 Saying forsooth in the inmost of its heart,
 'Because he did so yesterday with me,
 And otherwise with such another brute,
 So must he do henceforth and always.' —
 Aye?
 'Would teach the reasoning couple what 'must' means!
 'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.
 'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
 And we shall have to live in fear of Him
 So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
 If He have done His best, make no new world
 To please Him more, so leave off watching this, —
 If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
 Some strange day, — or, suppose, grow into it
 As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
 And there is He, and nowhere help at all.
 'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
 His dam held different, that after death
 He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:

Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,
 Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
 Saving last pain for worst, — with which,
 an end.
 Meanwhile the best way to escape His ire
 Is, not to seem too happy. Sees, himself,
 Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
 Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills both.
 'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
 On head and tail as if to save their lives:
 Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.
 Even so, 'would have Him misconceive,
 suppose
 This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
 And always, above all else, envies Him.
 Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
 Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
 And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
 Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
 O'erheard this speech, and asked 'What chucklest at?'
 'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
 Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
 Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
 Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:
 While myself lit a fire, and made a song
 And sung it, *'What I hate, be consecrate
 To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
 For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?'*
 Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
 Warts rub away, and sores are cured with slime,
 That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
 And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
 Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world
 at once!
 Crickets stop hissing; not a bird — or, yes,
 There scuds His raven that hath told Him all!
 It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
 Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house
 o' the move,
 And fast invading fires begin! White blaze —
 A tree's head snaps — and there, there,
 there, there, there,
 His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
 Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
 'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,

Will let those quails fly, will not eat this
month
One little mess of whelks, so he may
'scape!]

CONFESSIONS

[1864.]

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
'Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears?'
Ah, reverend sir, not I!

What I viewed there once, what I view
again

Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge, — is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle labelled 'Ether'
Is the house o'er-topping all.

At a terrace, somewhat near its stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind 's out of tune.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house 'The Lodge.'

What right had a lounge up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help, — their eyes
might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled 'Ether,'
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir — used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was —
But then, how it was sweet!

PROSPICE

[1864.]

FEAR death? — to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts
denote

I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the
storm,
The post of the foe;

Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible
form,

Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit
attained,

And the barriers fall,
Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon
be gained,

The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
The best and the last!

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes,
and forbore,
And bade me creep past.

No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like
my peers

The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's
arrears

Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the
brave,

The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices
that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace,
then a joy,

Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp
thee again,

And with God be the rest!

YOUTH AND ART

[1864.]

It once might have been, once only:

We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and pol-
ished,

Then laughed 'They will see some day
Smith made, and Gibson demolished.'

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
'Kate Brown 's on the boards ere long,
And Grisi's existence embittered!'

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse — nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

*Is coming the best
after Mrs B's death*

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eye's tail up,
As I shook upon E *in alt*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

But I think I gave you as good!
'That foreign fellow,—who can know
How she pays, in a playful mood,
For his tuning her that piano?'

Could you say so, and never say
'Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
And I fetch her from over the way,
Her, piano, and long tunes and short
tunes?'

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

Each life 's unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A LIKENESS

[1864.]

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup:
And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
Asks, 'Who was the lady, I wonder?'
'Tis a daub John bought at a sale,

Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder:
'What a shade beneath her nose!
Snuff-taking, I suppose,—'
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there 's no wife in the case,
But the portrait 's queen of the place,
Alone mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist ('not, alas! mine,
But my master's, the Tipton Slasher'),
And the cards where pistol-balls mark
ace,

And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns ('shot in the
Chablais')

And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
And the little edition of Rabelais:
Where a friend, with both hands in his
pockets,

May saunter up close to examine it,
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb
in it,

'But the eyes are half out of their sockets;
That hair 's not so bad, where the gloss
is,

But they've made the girl's nose a pro-
boscis:

Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
What, is not she Jane? Then, who is she?

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint
Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
In women I've seen the face of:
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.
I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fifty in one portfolio.

When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
Talk about pencil and lyre,
And the National Portrait Gallery:
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we've turned over twenty,
And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—'*Festina lentè!*
What 's that sweet thing there, the etching?'
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
How my cheeks grow red as tomatoes,
How my heart leaps! But hearts, after
leaps, ache.

'By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
That other, you praised, of Volpato's.'

The fool! would he try a flight further and
say

He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away.
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—
why, I'll not engage

But that, half in a rapture and half in a
rage,

I should toss him the thing's self — 'Tis
only a duplicate,

A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!

APPARENT FAILURE

'We shall soon lose a celebrated building.'

Paris Newspaper

[1864.]

No, FOR I'll save it! Seven years since,

I passed through Paris, stopped a day

To see the baptism of your Prince;

Saw, made my bow, and went my way:

Walking the heat and headache off,

I took the Seine-side, you surmise,

Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,

Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,

So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

Only the Doric little Morgue!

The dead-house where you show your
drowned:

Petrarch's Vacluse makes proud the
Sorgue,

Your Morgue has made the Seine re-
nowned.

One pays one's debt in such a case;

I plucked up heart and entered,—
stalked,

Keeping a tolerable face

Compared with some whose cheeks were
chalked:

Let them! No Briton's to be balked!

First came the silent gazers; next,

A screen of glass, we're thankful for;

Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,

The three men who did most abhor

Their life in Paris yesterday,

So killed themselves: and now, enthroned

Each on his copper couch, they lay

Fronting me, waiting to be owned.

I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

Poor men, God made, and all for that!

The reverence struck me; o'er each head

Religiously hung its hat,

Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,

Sacred from touch: each had his berth,

His bounds, his proper place of rest,

Who last night tenanted on earth

Some arch, where twelve such slept
abreast,—

Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

How did it happen, my poor boy?

You wanted to be Bonaparte

And have the Tuileries for toy,

And could not, so it broke your heart?

You, old one by his side, I judge,

Were, red as blood, a socialist,

A leveller! Does the Empire grudge

You've gained what no Republic missed?

Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

And this—why, he was red in vain,

Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!

What fancy was it, turned your brain?

Oh, women were the prize for you!

Money gets women, cards and dice

Get money, and ill luck gets just

The copper couch and one clear nice

Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,

The right thing to extinguish lust!

It's wiser being good than bad;

It's safer being meek than fierce:

It's fitter being sane than mad.

My own hope is, a sun will pierce

The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;

That, after Last, returns the First,

Though a wide compass round be fetched:

That what began best, can't end worst,

Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

O LYRIC LOVE

[FROM THE RING AND THE BOOK, END OF
BOOK I.]

[1868.]

O LYRIC Love, half angel and half bird,

And all a wonder and a wild desire,—

Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,

Took sanctuary within the holier blue,

And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—

Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—

When the first summons from the dark-
ling earth

Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched
their blue,

And bared them of the glory—to drop
down,

To toil for man, to suffer or to die.—

This is the same voice: can thy soul know
change?

Hail then, and harken from the realms of
help!

Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of
thee,

Except with bent head and beseeching
hand—

That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange

Of grace, some splendor once thy very
thought,

Some benediction anciently thy smile:

—Never conclude, but raising hand and
head

Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet
 yearn
 For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
 Their utmost up and on,—so blessing back
 In those thy realms of help, that heaven
 thy home,
 Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face
 makes proud,
 Some wanness where, I think, thy foot
 may fall!

AMPHIBIAN

[PROLOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR]

[1872.]

THE fancy I had to-day,
 Fancy which turned a fear!
 I swam far out in the bay,
 Since waves laughed warm and clear.

I lay and looked at the sun,
 The noon-sun looked at me:
 Between us two, no one
 Live creature, that I could see.

Yes! There came floating by
 Me, who lay floating too,
 Such a strange butterfly!
 Creature as dear as new:

Because the membraned wings
 So wonderful, so wide,
 So sun-suffused, were things
 Like soul and naught beside.

A handbreadth overhead!
 All of the sea my own,
 It owned the sky instead;
 Both of us were alone.

I never shall join its flight,
 For, naught buoys flesh in air.
 If it touch the sea—good night!
 Death sure and swift waits there.

Can the insect feel the better
 For watching the uncouth play
 Of limbs that slip the fetter,
 Pretend as they were not clay?

Undoubtedly I rejoice
 That the air comports so well
 With a creature which had the choice
 Of the land once. Who can tell?

What if a certain soul
 Which early slipped its sheath,
 And has for its home the whole
 Of heaven, thus look beneath,

Thus watch one who, in the world,
 Both lives and likes life's way,
 Nor wishes the wings unfurled
 That sleep in the worm, they say?

But sometimes when the weather
 Is blue, and warm waves tempt
 To free one's self of tether,
 And try a life exempt

From worldly noise and dust,
 In the sphere which overbrims
 With passion and thought,—why, just
 Unable to fly, one swims!

By passion and thought upborne,
 One smiles to one's self—"They fare
 Scarce better, they need not scorn
 Our sea, who live in the air!"

Emancipate through passion
 And thought, with sea for sky,
 We substitute, in a fashion,
 For heaven—poetry:

Which sea, to all intent,
 Gives flesh such noon-disport
 As a finer element
 Affords the spirit-sort.

Whatever they are, we seem:
 Imagine the thing they know;
 All deeds they do, we dream;
 Can heaven be else but so?

And meantime, yonder streak
 Meets the horizon's verge;
 That is the land, to seek
 If we tire or dread the surge:

Land the solid and safe—
 To welcome again (confess!)
 When, high and dry, we chafe
 The body, and don the dress.

Does she look, pity, wonder
 At one who mimics flight,
 Swims—heaven above, sea under,
 Yet always earth in sight?

THE HOUSEHOLDER

[EPILOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR]

[1872.]

SAVAGE I was sitting in my house, late,
 lone:

Dreary, weary with the long day's work:
 Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone:
 Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like
 a Turk;

When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,
 Half a pang and all a rapture, there
 again were we!—

"What, and is it really you again?" quoth
 I:

"I again, what else did you expect?"
 quoth She.

"Never mind, hie away from this old house—

Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and shame!

Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse!

Let them—every devil of the night—lay claim,

Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me! Good-by!

God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,

Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a heap!" quoth I:

"Nay, but there's a decency required!" quoth She.

"Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days, nights!

All the neighbor-talk with man and maid—such men!

All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights:

All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof: and then,

All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared try

Darker arts that almost struck despair in me?

If you knew but how I dwelt down here!" quoth I:

"And was I so better off up there?" quoth She.

"Help and get it over! *Reunited to his wife*

(How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know?)

Lies M. or N., departed from this life,

Day the this or that, month and year

the so and so.

What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!

Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?

Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!" quoth I:

"I end with—Love is all, and Death is nought!" quoth She.

MARTIN RELPH

My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster long ago,

On a bright May day, a strange old man, with a beard as white as snow,

Stand on the hill outside our town like a monument of woe,

And, striking his bare bald head the while, sob out the reason—so!

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never forgive myself:

But—God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,

As coward, coward I call him—him, yes, him! Away from me!

Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all eyes, no tongue?

People have urged, "You visit a scare too hard on a lad so young!

You were taken aback poor boy," they urge, "no time to regain your wits:

Besides it had maybe cost your life." Ay, there is the cap which fits!

So, cap me, the coward,—thus! No fear! A cuff on the brow does good:

The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the brain for food.

See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I trust, dear friends,

The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I have made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the hilltop, here stand I,

Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason why,

When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool, friends, since the bite

Of a worm inside is worse to bear; pray God I have balked him quite!

I'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It came of the way they cooped

Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because tight-hooped

By the red-coats round us villagers all: they meant we should see the sight

And take the example,—see, not speak, for speech was the Captain's right.

"You clowns on the slope, beware!" cried he: "This woman about to die

Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the spy.

Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them perhaps will learn

That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King the King's concern.

"Here's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between King George and his foes:

What call has a man of your kind—much less, a woman—to interpose?

Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not foes—so much the worse!

The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed with the few perverse.

"Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it you plainly a month ago,

And where was the good? The rebels have learned just all that they need to know.

Not a month since in we quietly marched:
a week, and they had the news,
From a list complete of our rank and
file to a note of our caps and shoes.

"All about all we did and all we were doing
and like to do!
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture
who wrote it, too.
Some of you men look black enough, but
the milk-white face demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 'tis a
woman who writes, be sure!

"Is it 'Dearie, how much I miss your
mouth!'—good natural stuff, she pens?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of
course: with talk about cocks and hens,
How 'robin has built on the apple-tree, and
our creeper which came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining
afresh round casement in famous leaf."

"But all for a blind! She soon glides
frank into 'Horrid the place is grown
With Officers here and Privates there, no
nook we may call our own:
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house,
and lodging will be to seek
For the second Company sure to come 'tis
whispered) on Monday week."

"And so to the end of the chapter! There!
The murder, you see, was out:
Easy to guess how the change of mind in
the rebels was brought about!
Safe in the trap would they now lie snug,
had treachery made no sign:
But treachery meets a just reward, no mat-
ter if fools malign!

"That traitors had played us false, was
proved—sent news which fell so pat:
And the murder was out—this letter of
love, the sender of this sent that!
'T is an ugly job, though, all the same—
a hateful, to have to deal
With a case of the kind, when a woman's
in fault: we soldiers need nerves of
steel!

"So, I gave her a chance, despatched post-
haste a message to Vincent Parkes
Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was,
since one of the King's own clerks,
Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the
town close by where the rebels camp:
A sort of lawyer, just the man to betray
our sort—the scamp!

"If her writing is simple and honest and
only the lover-like stuff it looks,
And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor
down in the rebels' books,

Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove
you are each of you clear of crime,
Or martial law must take its course: this
day next week 's the time!'

"Next week is now: does he come? Not
he! Clean gone, our clerk, in a trice!
He has left his sweetheart here in the
lurch: no need of a warning twice!
His own neck free, but his partner's fast
in the noose still, here she stands
To pay for her fault. 'T is an ugly job:
but soldiers obey commands.

"And hearken wherefore I make a speech!
Should any acquaintance share
The folly that led to the fault that is now
to be punished, let fools beware!
Look black, if you please, but keep hands
white: and, above all else, keep wives—
Or sweethearts or what they may be—from
ink! Not a word now, on your lives!"

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white
to the Captain's face—the brute
With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose
and the bloodshot eyes to suit!
He was muddled with wine, they say: more
like, he was out of his wits with fear;
He had but a handful of men, that 's
true,—a riot might cost him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page,
with pinioned arms and face
Bandaged about, on the turf marked out
for the party's firing-place.
I hope she was wholly with God: I hope
't was his angel stretched a hand
To steady her so, like the shape of stone
you see in our church-aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the
bandage to vex her eyes,
No face within which she missed without,
no questions and no replies—

"Why did you leave me to die?"—"Be-
cause" . . . Oh, fiends, too soon you
grin

At merely a moment of hell, like that—such
heaven as hell ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up
went the guns in a line.

Those heaped on the hill were blind as
dumb,—for, of all eyes, only mine
Looked over the heads of the foremost
rank. Some fell on their knees in
prayer,

Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes,
with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last,
had sidled behind the group:

I am highest of all on the hill-top, there
stand fixed while the others stoop!

From head to foot in a serpent's twine am
I tightened: *I* touch ground?
No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which
the fetters rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst —
ought else but see, see, only see?

And see I do — for there comes in sight —
a man, it sure must be! —

Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls,
rises, at random flings his weight

On and on, anyhow onward — a man that's
mad he arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white
high-flourished above his head?

Why does not he call, cry, — curse the fool!
— why throw up his arms instead?

O take this fist in your own face, fool!
Why does not yourself shout "Stay!"

Here 's a man comes rushing, might and
main, with something he's mad to
say?"

And a minute, only a moment, to have
hell-fire boil up in your brain,

And ere you can judge things right, choose
heaven, — time 's over, repentance vain!

They level: a volley, a smoke and the
clearing of smoke: I see no more

Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic
arms, nor the something white he bore.

But stretched on the field, some half-mile
off, is an object. Surely dumb,

Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody
heard, not one of us saw him come!

Has he fainted through fright? One may
well believe! What is it he holds so
fast?

Turn him over, examine the face! Hey-
day! What, Vincent Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the selfsame shot:
one bullet has ended both,

Her in the body and him in the soul. They
laugh at our plighted troth.

"Till death us do part?" Till death us do
join past parting — that sounds like

Betrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what
need has my fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed:
one bound, and your soul reached hers!

There is clenched in your hand the thing,
signed, sealed, the paper which plain
avers

She is innocent, innocent, plain as print,
with the King's Arms broad engraved:

No one can hear, but if any one high on
the hill can see, she's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with
heart-break — plain it grew

How the week's delay had been brought
about: each guess at the end proved
true.

It was hard to get at the folk in power:
such waste of time! and then
Such pleading and praying, with, all the
while, his lamb in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon
out, no end to the stupid forms —

The license and leave: I make no doubt —
what wonder if passion warms

The pulse in a man if you play with his
heart? — he was something hasty in
speech;

Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he
had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in
his grasp, — what followed but fresh
delays?

For the floods were out, he was forced to
take such a roundabout of ways!

And 't was "Halt there!" at every turn of
the road, since he had to cross the
thick

Of the red-coats: what did they care for
him and his "Quick, for God's sake,
quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long?
till the first knave smirked "You brag
Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend
to a King's friend here your nag!"

Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece
they plundered him still,

With their "Wait you must, — no help: if
ought can help you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was — I forget the
name — whose Mayor must have the
bench

Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for
"Vincent," thinks he, sounds French!

It well may have driven him daft, God
knows! all man can certainly know

Is — rushing and falling and rising, at last
he arrived in a horror — so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have res-
cued both! Ay, bite me! The worm
begins

At his work once more. Had cowardice
proved — that only — my sin of sins!

Friends, look you here! Suppose . . .
suppose . . . But mad I am, needs
must be!

Judas the Damned would never have dared
such a sin as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself,
my wretched self, and dreamed

In the heart of me "She were better dead
than happy and his!" — while gleamed

A light from hell as I spied the pair in a
perfectest embrace,

He the saviour and she the saved, — bliss
born of the very murder-place!

And say I was scared, trembled! Call me
lost and wander, but coming worse!
Near a the best, and give a the reward
I was near the reward's curse

That ear wears noise a such, and
take their shadow or substance with.
— a tend a their faith, I lost near
Pierced. — once I heard, a was will

And her — oh, I said "Good-morrow" to
her, "Good-even" and waving more

The stranger's eye! She was just to me
as you had been before.

So common a a and toward had be
"There's a friend over" "Thank" a
friend

In water I wanted, and now I can walk
get none by water! I think

ADAM, WHITE, AND EVE

(1882)

"We the a thundered and lightning,
"we women, dark frantically,
Ran to their seats, transformed, trans-
fused,

at the feet of the man who as between
and "Merry" cried each — "Is I tell the
truth
Of a passage a my mind!"

Said Eve, "Do you mind the morning
I met your love with smiling?
As the words of the women and my life,
I thought, "I desire the be to words
The mark from my and with a kiss — I
know

His name, — and love and all!"

Said Eve, "My love to be married!
The word, in some one, called
"A Paradise-like scene called!" smiled
me

I thought, as I walked, smiling too,
And now, that's your answer — we are
our own world's mark! Tell's just!"

I ceased a listen and wonder
In started with a wonder
I was moved and saw that the sky was
clear

Then laughed "Sweetest you believed as
Dear"

"I saw through the sky!" he was called
That a woman themselves were.

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

(1882)

From the time and the place
— and the word and together!

The man — how and a man

The day — how many weather
Where a the word and the

In a dream that eved one's face meets
mine.

But the house is narrow, the place is
wide

Where, sunset, rain and wind combine
With a narrow ear, a I strive to speak.

With a hostile eye at my flashing cheek,
With a notice that marks each word, each
sign

O-merry do and argentine,
Good! that from the waking man!

Do I told the Past

Thus true and that

The words of the Future told I can?
The path is not to pace shall lead

Through the magic of May to herself
secret

Or narrow I seeds the house must be,
Outside are the worms and strangers.

we —

Oh, when, when, when, keep I and one,
— I and one

SUMMER BONNIE

(1882)

And the breath and the bloom of the year
in the hall of one tree

All the wonder and wealth of the mine
in the heart of one gem

In the core of one pearl of the shade and
the white of the sea

Bright and bloom, shade and shine, —
wonder, wealth, and — how far above
them —

Truth, that's brighter than gem,
Love, that's purer than pearl —

Brighter truth, purer trust in the uni-
verse — all were for me

In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL & GIRL

(1882)

A golden ring with a single stone.

— The ring was an echo of price.

Whisper the ring word, that stone —

— Pearl starts a name like the ring's a a.

And so, was one and (name an Pearl
word)

In power and earth, heart whole and one
Through the power of a pearl.

A woman it is I the time that say

And like the world counts worthy
grade

From the rise word — and and away

— Love's her word, I am word in name.

— Through the word of power and earth

— Love's word and one — in a minute's time —

Through the love of a girl.

*but wants to live the party
which made his life heroic.*

EPILOGUE

[1884.]

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-
time.

When you set your fancies free.
Will they pass to where — by death, fools
think, imprisoned —

Low he lies who once so loved you, whom
you loved so

— Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!

What had I on earth to do

With the slothful, with the mawkish, the
unmanly?

Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I
drivel

— Being — who?

One who never turned his back but marched
breast forward.

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
wrong would triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight
better,

Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's
work-time

Greet the unseen with a cheer!

Bid him forward, breast and back as either
should be.

"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed — fight
on, fare ever

There as here!"

PIFFA PASSES

A DRAMA

[1884.]

NEW-YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE DRY-
SAX — *A large, merry, noisy, charming
A girl, Piffa, from the sub-mountain,
springing out of bed.*

DAY!

Faster and more fast.

O'er night's burn, day boils at last.

Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim

Where spurning and suppressed it lay

For not a froth-flake touched the rim

Of yonder gap in the solid gray

Of the eastern cloud, an hour away

But forth one wavelet then another curled

Till the whole sunset, not to be suppressed,

Rose, reddened, and its scorching breast

Flickered in hounds' green gold, then over-

flowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee

A mote of my twelve hours' measure.

The least of thy games or glances

Be they games thou art bound to, or glances
above measure.

One of thy choices, or one of thy chances
Be they tasks God imposed thee, or threats

at the pleasure! —

My Day, if I squander such labour or
leisure,

Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flow-
ing

Whence earth, we feel, gets ready help
and good —

Thy long, sunning-moments, coming going
in which each turns from work to game-

some mood —

All shall be mine! But thou must treat me
not

As the prosperous are treated, those who
love

At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
in readiness to take what thou wilt give,

And free to let go what thou wilt release!

For Day, my holiday, if thou wilt grant

Me, who am only Piffa — old-year's son-
net

Cast off last night, will come again to-
morrow

Whence, if thou prove gentle, I shall bor-
row

Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's
symphony

All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all turn alike possessors

Make general picture from particular truth,
Lie more for one way, is another less

Thou art my single day God lends to leisure
What were all earth else with a feel of
heaven

Sole light that helps me through the year,
the work

Try, now! Take Asolo's Four Happiness
Ones —

And let thy increasing man on that subject
Least thoughtfully Quince, can write down

Her Schick's heritage? All the while thy
ear

Beats fastest on her shrill-voiced window-
pane

He will but press the closer, breathe more
warm

Against her cheek, how should she mind
the storm!

And morning past, if midday shed a gleam

O'er lakes and fens, what care birds and
groves

Save for their dear selves? 'T is their
marriage-day

And while they leave church, and go home
their way

Mind clearing hands within each breast
would be

Sunshine and pleasant weather spot of
thee.

Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist, will Luigi and his mother
grieve—

The lady and her child, unmatched, for-
sooth,

She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town,
warm, close,

And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them! And yet once again, out-
break

In storm at night on Monsignor they make
Such stir about—whom they expect from
Rome

To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain—what storm dares hurt
his peace?

Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts
to ward

Thy thunder off, nor want the angels'
guard.

But Pippa—just one such mischance would
spoil

Her day that lightens the next twelve-
month's toil

At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!

And here I let time slip for nought!

Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught

With a single splash from my ewer!

You that would mock the best pursuer,

Was my basin overdeep?

One splash of water ruins you asleep,

And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits

Wheeling and counterwheeling,

Reeling, broken beyond healing—

Now grow together on the ceiling!

That will task your wits.

Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped
to see

Morsel after morsel flee

As merrily, as giddily—

Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on?

Where settles by degrees the radiant crip-
ple?

Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?

New-blown and ruddy as Saint Agnes'
nipple,

Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk
bird's poll!

Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the rip-
ple

Of ocean, bud there, fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps
disperse

Thick red flame through that dusk green
universe!

I am queen of thee, floweret;

And each fleshy blossom

Preserve I not—safer

Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom—

From weevil and chafer?

Laugh through my pane, then; solicit the
bee;

Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy
glee,

Love thy queen, worship me!

Worship whom else? For am I not, this
day,

Whate'er I please? What shall I please
to-day?

My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend
my day?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds
silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread
and milk:

But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;

I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste the pleasures, am called by the
names

Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the
morning,

Some one shall love me, as the world calls
love:

I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house
above,

And other house for shrubs, all glass in
front,

Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is
wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes;
And therefore, till the shrub-house door
unlocks,

I—what now?—give abundant cause for
prate

About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town—

How we talk in the little town below!

But love, love, love—there's better love,
I know!

This foolish love was only Day's first
offer;

I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?

Their house looks over Orcana valley—
Why should I not be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,

Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black
bright tresses,

Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no
dresses!

So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale

Pure cheeks — a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! — for are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?

A soft and easy life these ladies lead!
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no — not envy, this!

Not envy, sure! — for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from
the beginning,

As little fear of losing it as winning;
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their
wives,

And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret; what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is
stirred

With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new year, as brooding bird to bird
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than
friends),

Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a
charm;

Let me be Luigi! — If I only knew
What was my mother's face — my father,
too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love
befall

Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
Monsignor? — who to-night will bless the
home

Of his dead brother; and God will bless in
turn

That heart which beats, those eyes which
mildly burn

With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait! — even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-Year's hymn
declare?

What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God.
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work — God's puppets, best and
worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not 'a small event!' Why 'small?'
Costs it more pain that this ye call
A 'great event' should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!*

And more of it and more of it! — oh, yes —
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none — being just as great, no
doubt,

Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!
But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass-path gray with dew,
Under the pine-wood blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse —
No, dared carouse!

[*She enters the street.*]

I. — MORNING

*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.
LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Para-
mour, the German SEBALD.*

Sebald [sings.]

*Let the watching lids wink!
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think —
Deep into the night, drink!*

Ottima. Night? Such may be your
Rhineland nights, perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shut-
ter's chink —

We call such light the morning's: let us
see!

Mind how you grope your way, though!
How these tall

Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lat-
tice

Behind that frame! — Nay, do I bid you? —
Sebald,

It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of
course

The slide-bolt catches. — Well, are you con-
tent,

Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full
morning?

Oh, don't speak then!

Sebald. Ay, thus it used to be!
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till midday; I observed that, as I strolled

On mornings thro' the vale here: country girls

Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills;

But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!

And wisely; you were plotting one thing there,

Nature another outside. I looked up —
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.

Oh, I remember! — and the peasants laughed
And said, 'The old man sleeps with the young wife!'

This house was his, this chair, this window — his!

Ottima. Ah, the clear morning! I can see Saint Mark's;

That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza

Should lie — there's Padua, plain enough, that blue!

Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

Sebald. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where 's dew, where 's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised

In getting thro' the lattice yester-eve,
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark

I' the dust o' the sill.

Ottima. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

Sebald. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,

Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, *Ottima*? There, curse

The world, and all outside! Let us throw off

This mask: how do you bear yourself?

Let's out

With all of it!

Ottima. Best never speak of it.

Sebald. Best speak again and yet again of it,

Till words cease to be more than words.
'His blood,'

For instance — let those two words mean
'His blood'

And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,

'His blood.'

Ottima. Assuredly if I repented

The deed —

Sebald. Repent? who should repent, or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once say

That I repented?

Ottima. No, I said the deed —

Sebald. 'The deed' and 'the event' — just now it was

'Our passion's fruit' — the devil take such cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are —

Ottima. Here's the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too — wine of both sorts.

Black? white then?

Sebald. But am not I his cut-throat?

What are you?

Ottima. There trudges on his business from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet — always in one place at church,

Close under the stone wall by the south entry;

I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose

To let me pass — at first, I say, I used —
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,

I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.

This, *Sebald*?

Sebald. No, the white wine — the white wine!

Well, *Ottima*, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way,

Nor does it rise: pour on! To your black eyes!

Do you remember last damned New-Year's day?

Ottima. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying

His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up

To hunt them out.

Sebald. Hark you, *Ottima*,
One thing 's to guard against. We 'll not make much

One of the other — that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday — as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,

To show I love you — yes, still love you — love you

In spite of Luca and what 's come to him —
Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all!

We 'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied

By this — conceive you?

Ottima.

Love!

Sebald. Not tied so sure!

Because tho' I was wrought upon, have struck

His insolence back into him — am I
So surely yours? — therefore, forever
yours?

Ottima. Love, to be wise (one counsel
pays another),
Should we have — months ago, when first
we loved,

For instance that May morning we two
stole

Under the green ascent of sycamores —
If we had come upon a thing like that

Suddenly —

Sebald. 'A thing' — there again — 'a
thing!'

Ottima. Then, Venus' body, had we come
upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered
close —

Would you have pored upon it? Why
persist

In poring now upon it? For 't is here
As much as there in the deserted house —

You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse; I hate —

Dare you stay here? I would go back and
hold

His two dead hands, and say, 'I hate you
worse,

Luca, than' —

Sebald. Off, off — take your hands off
mine!

'T is the hot evening — off! oh, morning, is
it?

Ottima. There's one thing must be done
— you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Sebald. What would come, think you, if
we let him lie

Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by
this

Off from his face beside, as you will see.

Ottima. This dusty pane might serve for
looking-glass.

Three, four — four gray hairs! Is it so you
said

A plait of hair should wave across my
neck?

No — this way.

Sebald. *Ottima,* I would give your
neck,

Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts
of yours,

That this were undone! Killing! Kill the
world

So Luca lives again! — ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you — yes, and
feign

Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering
here —

Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would —

Ottima. See!

Sebald. No, I'll finish! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for
all?

All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there 's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturesome and fortunate:

What is one young for, else? In age we'll
sigh

O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown
over;

Still we have lived: the vice was in its
place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my
purse —

Do lovers in romances sin that way?

Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you
plucked me

These flowers to smell!

Ottima. My poor lost friend!

Sebald. He gave me

Life, nothing less; what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more —

Had he no right? What was to wonder
at?

He sat by us at table quietly —

Why must you lean across till our cheeks
touch'd?

Could he do less than make pretence to
strike?

'T is not the crime's sake — I'd commit
ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out,
undone!

And you — O, how feel you? feel you for
me?

Ottima. Well then, I love you better
now than ever,

And best — look at me while I speak to
you —

Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in
truth,

This mask, this simulated ignorance,

This affectation of simplicity,

Falls off our crime; this naked crime of
ours

May not, now, be looked over — look it
down!

Great? let it be great; but the joys it
brought,

Pay they or no its price? Come: they
or it!

Speak not! The past, would you give up
the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?

Give up that noon I owned my love for
you?

The garden's silence! even the single bee
Persisting in his toil suddenly stopped,

And where he hid you only could surmise

By some campanula's chalice set a-swing:
Who stammered, 'Yes, I love you'?
And when I ventured to receive you here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Sebald. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house
here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows
spread
To a yellow haze?

Ottima. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-
tree

Nipped by the first frost.

Sebald. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.

Ottima. Then our crowning night!

Sebald. The July night?

Ottima. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed
with heat,

Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to
each,

And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Sebald. How it came!

Ottima. Buried in woods we lay, you
recollect;

Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof—here
burned and there,

As if God's messenger thro' the close wood
screen

Plunged and replunged his weapon at a
venture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Sebald. Slower, *Ottima*—

Ottima. Sebald, as we lay,
Who said, 'Let death come now! 't is right
to die!

Right to be punished! nought completes
such bliss

But woe! Who said that?

Sebald. How did we ever rise?
Was 't that we slept? Why did it end?

Ottima. I felt you,
Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid
lips—

My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Sebald. I kiss you now, dear *Ottima*,
now, and now!

This way? Will you forgive me—be once
more

My great queen?

Ottima. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's ar-
bitress,

Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Sebald.

I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent—

(*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA*
singing)

The year 's at the spring,

And day 's at the morn;

Morning 's at seven;

The hill-side 's dew-pearled:

The lark 's on the wing;

The snail 's on the thorn;

God 's in his heaven—

All 's right with the world!

(*PIPPA passes.*)

Sebald. 'God 's in his heaven! Do you
hear that? Who spoke?

You, you spoke!

Ottima. Oh—that little ragged girl!
She must have rested on the step: we give
them

But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their
inside?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to
you.

She stoops to pick my double heart's-ease—
Sh!

She does not hear: call you out louder!

Sebald. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those
shoulders!

Ottima.

Sebald!

Sebald. Wipe off that paint! I hate you!

Ottima. Miserable!

Sebald. My God! and she is emptied of
it now!

Outright now!—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange
grace once?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it
likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places; and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web!—

Ottima.

Speak to me—not of me!

Sebald. That round great full-orbed
face, where not an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!

Ottima. To me—not of me! Ungrate-
ful, perjured cheat!

A coward, too—but ingrate 's worse than
all!

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing
lie!

Leave me! betray me! I can see your drift!
A lie that walks and eats and drinks!

Sebald.

My God!

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-
blades—

I should have known there was no blood
beneath!

Ottima. You hate me, then? You hate me, then?

Sebald.

To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt, And fascinate by sinning, show herself Superior—guilt from its excess superior To innocence. That little peasant's voice Has righted all again. Though I be lost, I know which is the better, never fear, Of vice or virtue, purity or lust, Nature or trick! I see what I have done, Entirely now! Oh, I am proud to feel Such torments—let the world take credit thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its price! I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his heaven!

Ottima.

Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me! Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you! Lean on my breast—not as a breast; do n't love me

The more because you lean on me, my own

Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

Sebald. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all I feel

is—is, at swift-recurring intervals, A hurry-down within me, as of waters

Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit: There they go—whirls from a black, fiery sea!

Ottima. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the House of JULES, a young French Statuary, at Possagno.

1st Student. Attention! my own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2d Student. All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, im-

mortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—'*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*' His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phabus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures—*
3d Student. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2d Student. Good!—Only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris*—and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Student. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by; I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gottlieb. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Student. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gottlieb. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Student. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gottlieb. See here! 'He has been accustomed,' he writes, 'to have Canova's women about him in stone, and the world's women beside him in flesh; these being as much below, as those above, his soul's aspiration;'

but now he is to have the reality.'—There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Student. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus—

1st Student. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules—a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye; all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—'In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!' Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Student. Tell him about the women; go on to the women!

1st Student. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least; he would wait, and love only

at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's 'hair like sea-moss'—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his mistress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Student. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Student. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in!

2d Student. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off!

6th Student. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gottlieb. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Student. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Student. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gottlieb. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Student. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind,

man that acquaintance — but where he
 sits, got, with a few minutes ago passed
 in singing in voice.

III — GARY

Dear Friend, The House of Commons will
 move in session this Friday. We are
 proud to have you here.

Do not be afraid. I am sure you will
 see that now. Let me write to you now and
 then.

If you can do it, never say. So now —
 let me write a single line. I am sure
 that length of time and distance, your
 this will

Like an arrow, flower upward, eyes, lips,
 the

What this — no, let your heart write
 to their eyes.

Push down my hand upon you? What hand
 ever

The one was all I change, grow you — I
 could

Change and you believe

And I am sure this is your hand in mine,
 and you to see me at all a time. There
 is

I have spoken, speak you!

Oh, my life is mine!
 No, I have said to you that I have
 in this

Let me be sure with you about the
 time.

Where was I when you? When I think
 this will

The moment of your hand was written
 in mine.

Whether you? Said I ever wrote again.
 Let there be my old words again.

But each moment stand with you to
 this.

We have written to ourselves to know!
 Will my hand, then, see you with their
 eyes —

The day, then, writing and reading me,
 Setting down me!

Now, then!

Set all your letters! What? not well
 covered?

Your hand, then, is written in mine, the
 time.

Your hand, then, is written in mine, the
 time, the time.

Oh — the time, then, the time, the time,
 the time.

Let me write

Again, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

Let me write, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

Let me write, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

Let me write, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

Let me write, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

Let me write, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

Let me write, then, the time, the time,
 the time, the time.

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Let me write, then, the time, the time,
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From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor
crowns cast off,

Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts ap-
prove,

Devoutly their unconquerable hymn!
But you must say a 'well' to that—say,
'well!'

Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—
marbly

Even to the silence! why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one
form

Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the
fruit,—

Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved bee-wise o'er its bough; as rosy
limbs,

Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad
sprang!

But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile
chalk

That yields your outline to the air's em-
brace,

Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom,
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath
my tools

More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from
depths

In the earth's heart, where itself breeds
itself,

And whence all baser substance may be
worked—

Refine it off to air you may, condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden specks my chisel
trips?

—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, ap-
proach,

Lay bare those bluish veins of blood
asleep?

Lurks flame in no strange windings where,
surprised

By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?—

Phene! what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating
eyes!

Ah, you will die—I knew that you would
die!

PHENE begins, on his having long
remained silent.

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need
I speak

Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to
mind

One half of it, beside, and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.

Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep
myself

Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed; but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We 'll stay, then, as we
are—

Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!
If I could look forever up to them,
As now you let me, I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the
earth

Whence all that 's low comes, and there
touch and stay—

Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is my-
self,

Not me the shame and suffering; but they
sink,

Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so
Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—'I love you,
love—'

I could prevent it if I understood
More of your words to me—was 't in the
tone

Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only,
change

No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled
up.

Natalia threatened me that harm would
follow

Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant,
not you.

Your friends—Natalia said they were
your friends

And meant you well—because, I doubted
it,

Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to
bear,

But never men, men cannot stoop so low:

Yet your friends, speaking of you, used
that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-con-
ceit
Which seems to take possession of the
world
And make of God their tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites—you know!
But still Natalia said they were your
friends,
And they assented though they smiled the
more,
And all came round me—that thin Eng-
lishman
With light, lank hair seemed leader of the
rest;
He held a paper—‘What we want,’ said
he,
Ending some explanation to his friends,
‘Is something slow, involved, and mystical,
To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his
taste
And lure him on until at innermost
Where he seeks sweetness’ soul, he may
find—this!
As in the apple’s core the noisome fly;
For insects on the rind are seen at once,
And brushed aside as soon, but this is
found
Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.’
And so he read what I have got by heart:
I ‘ll speak it,—‘Do not die, love! I am
yours’—
No—is not that, or like that, part of
words
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to
lose
What cost much pains to learn! Is this
more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
In my life, a devil rather than saint,
In my brain, as poor a creature too—
No end to all I cannot do!
Yet do one thing at least I can—
Love a man, or hate a man
Supremely: thus my love began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,
In its loveliest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my
tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside.
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter
meant
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)*
And further, I traversed Hate’s Grove,
In its hatefullest nook to dwell;
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched
Love
Where the shadow threefold fell!
(The meaning—those black bride’s-eyes
above,
Not the painter’s lip should tell!)

‘And here,’ said he, ‘Jules probably will ask,
You have black eyes,’ love—you are, sure
enough,
My peerless bride,—then do you tell, in-
deed,
What needs some explanation—what
means this?’—
And I am to go on, without a word—

*So I grew wise in Love and Hate,
From simple that I was of late.
Once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form, and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love immensely!
And when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe’s whole life out like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!
But now I am wiser, know better the fash-
ion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite
passion;
And if I see cause to love more, or hate
more
Than ever man loved, ever hated, before—
And seek in the Valley of Love
The nest, or the nook in Hate’s Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other’s borders.
When I love most, Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate’s iron
casque,
Hate grins through Love’s rose-braided
mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin, but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered
straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche
can hate!*

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche! who else? But all of them, no
doubt,
Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not
meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me!
Keep
What’s here, the gold—we cannot meet
again,
Consider—and the money was but meant
For two years’ travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.

This — and what comes from selling these,
my casts
And books and medals, except — let them
go

Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches! — If by chance
(For all's chance here) I should survive
the gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world
is wide.

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA
singing)

Give her but a least excuse to love me!

When — where —

How — can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me?

('Hist!' said Kate the Queen;

*But 'Oh!' cried the maiden, binding her
tresses,*

'T is only a page that carols unseen,

Crumbling your hounds their messes!')

*Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her
honour,*

My heart!

*Is she poor? — What costs it to be styled a
donor?*

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part!

*But that fortune should have thrust all this
upon her!*

('Nay, list!' bade Kate the Queen;

*And still cried the maiden, binding her
tresses,*

'T is only a page that carols unseen

Fitting your hawks their jesses!')

(PIPPA passes)

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang
forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who re-
nounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain
page

Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to 'Kate the
Queen' —

'She never could be wronged, be poor,' he
sighed,

'Need him to help her!'

Yes, a bitter thing

To see our lady above all need of us;

Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,

But the world looks so. If whoever loves

Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,

The blessing or the blest one, queen or
page,

Why should we always choose the page's
part?

Here is a woman with utter need of me, —
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche, — fresh upon her
lips

Alit the visionary butterfly,

Waiting my word to enter and make
bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward
things

Fastened their image on its passiveness;

Now, it will wake, feel, live — or die
again!

Shall to produce form out of unshaped
stuff

Be art — and, further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is
mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that
do? — save

A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their laughter! — Oh,
to hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I
heard them

Henceforth, not God!

To Ancona — Greece — some isle!

I wanted silence only! there is clay

Everywhere. One may do whate'er one
likes

In art; the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it — which takes pains
to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene — this mad
dream!

Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's
friends,

What the whole world except our love —
my own,

Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land — some
isle

With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside —
I do but break these paltry models up

To begin art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I —
And save him from my statue meeting
him?

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!

Like a god going thro' his world there
stands

One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its
brow;

And you are ever by me while I gaze —
Are in my arms as now — as now — as now!

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!

Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.

*Bluphocks.** So that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, do n't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business: we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors; we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man besides. *Oh! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas fagot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity—'t was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac (these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*), and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c.—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you 'll say—*'How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,'*—or, *'How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,'*—or, *'How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.'* In no wise! *'Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser, and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!'* So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never an obolus*—though, thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you, or this Bishop thro' his Intendant, I possess a burning pocketful of *zwanzigers*—to pay the Stygian ferry!

* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

1st Policeman. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder this long while—not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Policeman. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebal, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Bluphocks. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is short for Felippa—rhyming to—*Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2d Policeman. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3d Policeman. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (*That English fool's busy watching.*)

2d Policeman. Flourish all round—'Put all possible obstacles in his way;' oblong dot at the end—'Detain him till further advices reach you;' scratch at bottom—'Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;' ink-spirit on right-hand side (which is the case here)—'Arrest him at once.' Why and wherefore, I do n't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING

Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo. LUIGI and his Mother entering.

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.
Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped
up!
Hark—'Lucius Junius!' The very ghost
of a voice,
Whose body is caught and kept by—what
are those?
Mere withered wallflowers, waving over-
head?
They seem an elvish group with thin
bleached hair
That lean out of their topmost fortress—
look
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
Hands under chin of each grave earthy
face.
Up and show faces all of you!—'All of
you!'
That 's the king's dwarf with the scarlet
comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate! Hark—
'Meet your fate!'
Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi
—do not
Go to his city! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned;
Your Pellicos and writers for effect
Write for effect.
Luigi. Hush! say A writes, and B.
Mother. These A's and B's write for
effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A and B not kill him themselves?
Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A tried and
failed,
I could not teach that: mine's the lesser
task.
Mother. They visit night by night—
Mother. You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?
Luigi. Luigi? Not? Oh, the one thing you
fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself. At times—nay, even as
now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, sus-
pect
All is not sound; but is not knowing that
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I
walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—'I am rich,
Young, healthy; why should this fact trou-
ble me

More than it troubles these?' But it does
trouble.
No, trouble 's a bad word; for as I walk
There 's springing and melody and giddi-
ness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my
youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me—whatever may amuse me,
And earth seems in a truce with me, and
heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their
strife,
The very cicala laughs, 'There goes he, and
there!
Feast him, the time is short; he is on his
way
For the world's sake: feast him this once,
our friend!'
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!
Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on
him!
Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that
I am right!
Mother. Mistrust your judgment, then,
of the mere means
To this wild enterprise: say you are right,
How should one in your state e'er bring to
pass
What would require a cool head, a cold
heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.
Luigi. Escape? To even wish that would
spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o'er
with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparerlied feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so
much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and
great stars
That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun
away—
Those crescent moons with notched and
burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there
stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the
storm—
May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer
nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is true,—
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's
skulls.

Mother. See now: you reach the city,
you must cross

His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that 's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you
guess—

But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve;
and yet

Have you not seen me range our coppice
yonder

In search of a distorted ash? I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect
bow!

Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned
man

Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed
up—

White satin here, to set off my black
hair;

In I shall march—for you may watch
your life out

Behind thick walls, make friends there to
betray you;

More than one man spoils everything.
March straight—

Only no clumsy knife to fumble for!
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter)
on

Thro' guards and guards—I have re-
hearsed it all

Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Do n't ask the way of whom you meet,
observe,

But where they cluster thickliest is the
door

Of doors; they 'll let you pass—they 'll
never blab

Each to the other, he knows not the favour-
ite,

Whence he is bound and what 's his busi-
ness now.

Walk in—straight up to him; you have no
knife:

Be prompt, how should he scream? Then,
out with you!

Italy, Italy, my Italy!

You 're free, you 're free! Oh, mother,
I could dream

They got about me—Andrea from his
exile,

Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his
grave!

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems
this patriotism

The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire. He loves himself—and next,
the world—

If he must love beyond—but nought be-
tween:

As a short-sighted man sees nought mid-
way

His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient

To my least wish, and running o'er with
love;

I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him!—
then go!

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make
sport of me?

How first the Austrians got these prov-
inces—

If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon—
Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby—

Mother. Well?

Luigi. (Sure he 's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo—Spring 's his con-
fident,

And he lets out her April purposes!)

Or—better go at once to modern time—
He has—they have—in fact, I under-
stand

But can't restate the matter; that 's my
boast:

Others could reason it out to you, and
prove

Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night?

Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

Luigi. 'I am the bright and morning-
star,' saith God—

And, 'to such an one I give the morning-
star!'

The gift of the morning-star! Have I
God's gift

Of the morning-star?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. Well for those
who live through June!

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring
pumps

Which triumph at the heels of June the
God

Leading his revel thro' our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here—

Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her
coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?

Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes
upturned
As if life were one long and sweet sur-
prise:

In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!
(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA
singing)

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now;
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and
horn*

*Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born:
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by—
The gods so loved him while he dreamed,
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should
ever die!

*Among the rocks his city was:
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows:
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and
pressed,
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
At last there by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sit-
ting in the sun!

*His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,
Where the very blue had turned to white.*

*'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge away;
But when he saw the sweepy hair,
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world
began!*

(PIPPA passes.)

Luigi. And such grace have they, now
that the world ends!
The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won, in this late
time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to
reach?
'T is God's voice calls, how could I stay?
Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the Turret to the Bishop's brother's
House, close to the Duomo Santa Maria.
Poor Girls sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to
Venice—the stout sea-farer!

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish
for wings.

Let us all wish; you, wish first!

2d Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.

3d Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Grayer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last
week—

Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and
mumbling

The while some folly about how well I
fare,

Let sit and eat my supper quietly—

Since had he not himself been late this
morning,

Detained at—never mind where,—had he
not—

'*Uh, baggage, had I not!*'—

2d Girl. How she can lie!

1st Girl. My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming: I
would wear

A long loose gown—down to the feet
and hands,

With plaits here, close about the throat, all
day;

And all night lie, the cool long nights,
in bed;

And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats—ah,
I should say,

That is away in the fields—miles!

3d Girl. Say at once
You'd be at home—she'd always be at
home!

Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April
snowed

White blossoms on her as she ran. Why,
fool,

They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how
tall you were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his
cage,

Made a dunghill of your garden!

1st Girl. They destroy
My garden since I left them? well—per-
haps!

I would have done so—so I hope they
have!

A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was
born:

Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps
o'erhead

Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse
long papers,

And the wasps eat them, prick them through
and through.

3d Girl. How her mouth twitches!
Where was I?—before

She broke in with her wishes and long
gowns

And wasps—would I be such a fool?—
Oh, here!

See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust; and,
there—

Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled
at least!

1st Girl. When I was young, they said
if you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there would shine no more that day nor
next.

2d Girl. When you were young? Nor
are you young, that's true!

How your plump arms, that were, have
dropped away!

Why, I can span them! Cecco beats you
still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black—the men say they are sick
of black,

Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough!
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to
slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2d Girl. Why, there! is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—
quick,—

Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or
she would sing.

For the Intendant said—

3d Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close—I'll
tell you,

Sing that song the young English noble
made,

Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—
what fun!

2d Girl. [Sings]

You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry

Your love's protracted growing:

June reared that bunch of flowers you
carry

From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartful now: some seed

At least is sure to strike

And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,

A grave's one violet:

Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.

What's death?—you'll love me yet!

3d Girl. (To Pippa, who approaches)
Oh, you may come closer—we shall not eat
you! Why, you seem the very person that
the great rich handsome Englishman has
fallen so violently in love with! I'll tell
you all about it.

IV.—NIGHT

The Palace by the Duomo. MONSIGNOR,
dismissing his Attendants

Monsignor. Thanks, friends, many
thanks. I chiefly desire life now, that I
may recompense every one of you. Most
I know something of already. What, a
repass prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur—*
ugh—ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you
were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild,
very unlike winter-weather; but I am a
Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys
here. To be sure, when 't was full sum-
mer at Messina, as we priests used to cross
in procession the great square on Assump-
tion Day, you might see our thickest yellow
tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a
falling-star, or sink down on themselves

in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

Intendant. Uguccio—

Monsignor.—Uguccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Intendant. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Monsignor. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3d of December, I find him—

Intendant. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Monsignor. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below. I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3d of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both; he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art. Here's his letter: 'He never had a clearly conceived ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,'—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Intendant. Is Correggio a painter?

Monsignor. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet now, or a musician—spirits who have conceived and perfected an ideal through some other channel—transferring

it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Intendant. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter, end now—what is it you want with me?

Monsignor. Ugo!

Intendant. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant—what?

Monsignor. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Intendant. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Monsignor. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli—which, I forgot to observe, is your true name—was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Intendant. No, nor needs be; for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him—

Monsignor. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father—rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest; my dear two dead brothers were—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however: so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to

pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the offscouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Intendant. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Monsignor. Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say—

Intendant. 'Forgive us our trespasses?'

Monsignor. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I, who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Intendant. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Monsignor. 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

Intendant. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever

produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly; the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Monsignor. Liar!

Intendant. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity—which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Monsignor. I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Intendant. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify heaven, and die!—Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this morning. Of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned English knave I and the police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'T is but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'T is as well settled once and forever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA singing)

Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know;
For what are the voices of birds—
Ay, and of beasts—but words, our words,

*Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon
ranges;*

*And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me!*

(PIPPA passes.)

*Monsignor. [Springing up.] My people
—one and all—all—within there! Gag
this villain—tie him hand and foot! He
dares—I know not half he dares—but
remove him—quick! Miserere mei, Do-
mine! quick, I say!*

PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.

*The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-
worm, I pray,
How fare they?*

*Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my
Zanze!*

*'Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze'—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?*

*No bidding me then to—what did she say?
'Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small
feet shoes*

*More like'—what said she?—'and less
like canoes!'*

*How pert that girl was!—would I be those
pert,*

*Impudent, staring women? It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest
upon me:*

*No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and
thick rings*

*Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year
brings!*

*I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph—something! I had caught the un-
couth name*

*But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours; it were, indeed, a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The—ah, but—ah, but, all the same,*

*No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings
scare*

*The devil; so there's that proud look to
spare!*

*Which is mere counsel to myself, mind!
for*

*I have just been the holy Monsignor!
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi
started*

*Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's
trim,*

*And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New-Year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content!*

*Even my lily's asleep, I vow;
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked
you!*

*Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen,
While the leaves and parts that witness
The old proportions and their fitness
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now—
Call this pampered thing improved now!
Suppose there's a king of the flowers,
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
'Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,'
Says he, 'Zanze from the Brenta,
I have made her gorge polenta
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
As her—name there's no pronouncing!
See this heightened colour too,
For she swilled Breganze wine
Till her nose turned deep carmine—
'T was but white when wild she grew.
And only by this Zanze's eyes
Of which we could not change the size,
The magnitude of all achieved
Otherwise, may be perceived!'*

*Oh, what a drear, dark close to my poor
day!*

*How could that red sun drop in that black
cloud?*

*Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over—now arrives the night's.
O lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle, and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle*

From day and its delights!
 But at night, brother howlet, over the
 woods,
 Toll the world to thy chantry;
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with gallantry:
 Then, owls and bats,
 Cows and twats,
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!
[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like to really
 know:
 How near I ever might approach all these
 I only fancied being, this long day—
 Approach, I mean, so as to touch them,
 so
 As to—in some way—move them—if
 you please,
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.
 For instance, if I wind
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
 [Sitting on the bedside.]
 And broider Ottima's cloak's hem.
 Ah, me and my important part with them,
 This morning's hymn half promised when
 I rose!
 True in some sense or other, I suppose.
 [As she lies down.]
 God bless me! I can pray no more to-
 night.
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say
 right.
*All service ranks the same with God—
 With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
 Are we; there is no last nor first.*
 [She sleeps.]

IN A BALCONY

PERSONS

NORBERT
 CONSTANCE
 THE QUEEN
 [1855.]

CONSTANCE and NORBERT

Nor. Now.

Con. Not now.

Nor. Give me them
 again, those hands—

Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
 Press them before my eyes, the fire comes
 through!

You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
 Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er
 I ask—

How can I gain you and not ask the
 Queen?

There she stays waiting for me, here stand
 you.

Some time or other this was to be asked;
 Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—
 Let me ask now, Love!

Con. Do, and ruin us.

Nor. Let it be now, Love! All my soul
 breaks forth.

How I do love you! give my love its way!
 A man can have but one life and one death,
 One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my
 fate—

Grant me my heaven now. Let me know
 you mine,

Prove you mine, write my name upon your
 brow,

Hold you and have you, and then die away
 If God please, with completion in my soul.

Con. I am not yours then? how content
 this man?

I am not his, who change into himself,
 Have passed into his heart and beat its
 beats,

Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my
 hair,

Give all that was of me away to him
 So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
 Takes part with him against the woman
 here,

Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
 As caring that the world be cognisant
 How he loves her and how she worships
 him.

You have this woman, not as yet that world.
 Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
 By saving what I cease to care about,
 The courtly name and pride of circum-
 stance—

The name you'll pick up and be cumbered
 with

Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing
 more;

Just that the world may slip from under
 you—

Just that the world may cry 'So much for
 him—

The man predestined to the heap of crowns:
 There goes his chance of winning one, at
 least!

Nor. The world!

Con. You love it. Love
 me quite as well,

And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
 Why must you ponder what it knows or
 thinks?

Nor. You pray for—what, in vain!

Con. Oh my heart's heart,
 How I do love you, Norbert!—that is
 right!

But listen, or I take my hands away.
 You say, 'let it be now'—you would go
 now

And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from
 us,

You love me—so you do, thank God!

Nor.

Thank God!

Con. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,

And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,

Listening to me. You are the minister, The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.

To-night completes your wonderful year's-work

(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)

Made memorable by her life's success,

The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,

Her house had only dreamed of anciently.

That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,

To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved

What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?

You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.

Next comes the Queen's turn. 'Name your own reward!'

With leave to clench the Past, chain the To-come,

Put out an arm and touch and take the sun

And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,

Possess yourself supremely of her life,—

You choose the single thing she will not grant;

Nay, very declaration of which choice

Will turn the scale and neutralize your work.

At best she will forgive you, if she can.

You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief

The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

Con. There, there!

So men make women love them, while they know

No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,

You that are just and generous beside,

Make it your own case. For example now, I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—

Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—

The kiss, because you have a name at court.

This hand and this, that you may shut in each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such.

That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen—

Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.

'I was a nameless man; you needed me:

Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood

A certain pretty cousin at your side.

Why did I make such common cause with you?

Access to her had not been easy else.

You give my labours here abundant praise?

'Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.

How shall your gratitude discharge itself?

Give me her hand!"

Nor. And still I urge the same.

Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

Con. Yes, just. You love a rose; no harm in that:

But was it for the rose's sake or mine

You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—

Then, mine you still must say or else be false.

You told the Queen you served her for herself:

If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,

She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!

I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,

One sees the twenty pictures; there's a life

Better than life, and yet no life at all.

Conceive her born in such a magic dome,

Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,

Can recognize its given things and facts,

The fight of giants or the feast of gods,

Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,

Chases and battles, the whole earth's display,

Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers

and fruit—

And who shall question that she knows them all,

In better semblance than the things outside?

Yet bring into the silent gallery

Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,

Some lion, with the painted lion there—

You think she'll understand composedly?

—Say, 'that's his fellow in the hunting-piece

Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?'

Not so. Her knowledge of our actual

earth,

Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,

Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.

The real exists for us outside, not her:

How should it, with that life in these four walls,

That father and that mother, first to last

No father and no mother—friends, a heap,

Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,

And every one of them alike a lie!

Things painted by a Rubens out of nought

Into what kindness, friendship, love should

be;

All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,
You feel, while you admire. How should
she feel?

Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real strug-
gling love

In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's
the truth—

She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?
You only have to say 'so men are made,
For this they act; the thing has many
names,

But this the right one: and now, Queen,
be just!"

Your life slips back; you lose her at the
word:

You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Nor-
bert,

Do you not understand?

Nor. The Queen's the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window o'er the people's
street,

As she in the gallery where the pictures
glow:

The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love; what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one
voice—

'The woman yonder, there 's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes
in one

And bear them—make a pile of all earth's
joys

And spurn them, as they help or help not
this;

Only, obtain her!'—How was it to be?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white
star

With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the star
or no?

Instead, there was the Queen to serve!
I served,

Helped, did what other servants failed to
do.

Neither she sought nor I declared my
end.

Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never
be?

Let her wake now. She thinks there was
more cause

In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their
lives

Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy
too;

I worked because I want you with my
soul:

I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!
Con. Had I not loved you from the very
first,

Were I not yours, could we not steal out
thus

So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might become impatient. What 's
conceived

Of us without here, by the folks within?
Where are you now? immersed in cares of
state—

Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread
hand!

What was this thought for, what that
scruple of yours

Which broke the council up?—to bring
about

One minute's meeting in the corridor!
And then the sudden sleights, strange
secrecies,

Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of
a look,

'Does she know? does she not know? saved
or lost?'

A year of this compression 's ecstasy
All goes for nothing! you would give this
up

For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells
his wife!

What tempts you?—their notorious happi-
ness

Makes you ashamed of ours? The best
you'll gain

Will be, the Queen grants all that you
require,

Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
And me at once, and gives us ample leave
To live like our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious
hand

Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
Where we so oft have stolen across its
traps!

Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons'
feet,

And make it duty to be bold and swift,
Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
We never hawked by rights till flung from
fist?

Oh, the man's thought!—no woman's such
a fool.

Nor. Yes, the man's thought and my
 thought, which is more—
 One made to love you, let the world take
 note!
 Have I done worthy work? be love's the
 praise,
 Though hampered by restrictions, barred
 against
 By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!
 Set free my love, and see what love can
 do
 Shown in my life—what work will spring
 from that!
 The world is used to have its business done
 On other grounds, find great effects pro-
 duced
 For power's sake, fame's sake, motives
 in men's mouth.
 So, good: but let my low ground shame
 their high!
 Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life
 be true!
 And love 's the truth of mine. Time
 prove the rest!
 I choose to wear you stamped all over me,
 Your name upon my forehead and my
 breast,
 You, from the sword's blade to the rib-
 bon's edge,
 That men may see, all over, you in me—
 That pale loves may die out of their pre-
 tence
 In face of mine, shames thrown on love
 fall off.
 Permit this, Constance! Love has been so
 long
 Subdued in me, eating me through and
 through,
 That now it 's all of me and must have
 way.
 Think of my work, that chaos of in-
 trigues,
 Those hopes and fears, surprises and de-
 lays,
 That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
 Trembling at last to its assured result—
 Then think of this revulsion! I resume
 Life after death, (it is no less than life,
 After such long unlovely labouring days)
 And liberate to beauty life's great need
 Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted
 work,
 Suppresst itself erewhile. This eve 's the
 time—
 This eve intense with yon first trembling
 star
 We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught
 between
 The earth that rises and the heaven that
 bends;
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts

And fixed so, every flower and every
 weed,
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;
 All under God, each measured by itself.
 These statues round us stand abrupt, dis-
 tinct,
 The strong in strength, the weak in weak-
 ness fixed,
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
 Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her
 rose:
 See God's approval on His universe!
 Let us do so—aspire to live as these
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being
 true!
 Take the first way, and let the second
 come!
 My first is to possess myself of you;
 The music sets the march-step—forward,
 then!
 And there 's the Queen, I go to claim
 you of,
 The world to witness, wonder and ap-
 plaud.
 Our flower of life breaks open. No de-
 lay!
Con. And so shall we be ruined, both
 of us.
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and
 bone—
 You do not know her, were not born to
 it,
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.
 Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your
 smile,
 Generous as you are: for, in that thin
 frame
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and
 through with cares,
 There lived a lavish soul until it starved,
 Debarred all healthy food. Look to the
 soul—
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
 (The true man's-way) on justice and your
 rights,
 Exactions and acquittance of the Past!
 Begin so—see what justice she will deal!
 We women hate a debt as men a gift.
 Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
 Whose business is to sit thro' summer-
 months
 And dole out children leave to go and
 play,
 Herself superior to such lightness—she
 In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic
 pomp,
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth
 outside—
 We wonder such a face looks black on
 us?
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
 (That were vain truly—none is left to
 wake)

But, let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and
mark

If she'll not coldly pay its warmest need!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit:
Yet, thinking that her justice was en-
gaged

To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other
loves

Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of such cold kind
To pay her with, but love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love:

I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you
twice

That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Could lay the whole I did to love's ac-
count,

Nor yet be false as courtiers go—
Declaring my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it
else?

And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it! then, were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it offer what I really take,
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
Her value as the next thing to the
Queen's—

Since none love Queens directly, none dare
that,

And a thing's shadow or a name's mere
echo
Suffices those who miss the name and
thing!

You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
To keep in proof how near her breath
you came.

Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
Ask for me that way—(oh, you under-
stand)

You'd find the same gift yielded with a
grace.

Which, if you make the least show to
extort . . .

—You'll see! and when you have ruined
both of us,

Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you
consent?

'Tis not my way; I have more hope in
truth:

Still, if you won't have truth—why, this
indeed,

Were scarcely false, as I'd express the
sense.

Will you remain here?

Con. O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take
my way?

Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for
me,

Paint plain my poor conceit and make it
serve?

I owe that withered woman everything—
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my
part—

Help me to pay her! Stand upon your
rights?

You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on
you?

Your rights are mine—you have no rights
but mine.

Nor. Remain here. How you know me!

Con. Ah, but still—

*Hè breaks from her: she remains.
Dance-music from within.*

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance!—She is here as he
said. Speak! quick!

Is it so? is it true—or false? One word!

Con. True.

Queen. Mercifullest Mother,
thanks to thee!

Con. Madam!

Queen. I love you, Constance,
from my soul.

Now say once more, with any words you
will,

'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

Con. Why should you doubt it?

Queen. Ah,
why doubt? why doubt?

Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?
None see themselves; another sees them
best.

You say 'why doubt it?'—you see him
and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we
fail—

Whate'er we yearn for would be granted
us;

Howbeit we let our whims prescribe de-
spair,

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our
will,

And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love

And of being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven!

Queen. But it was so, Constance,
it was so!

Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
'Stop here, your life is set, you are grown
old.

Too late—no love for you, too late for
love—

Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Con-
stance love!

One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
 Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
 'Oh, love, true, never think of love again!
 I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed.'
 So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
 Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
 Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

Con. I cannot understand—

Queen. The happier you!
 Constance, I know not how it is with men:
 For women, (I am a woman now like you)
 There is no good of life but love—but love!
 What else looks good, is some shade flung from love—
 Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
 Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
 Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

O Constance, how I love you!

Con. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come through you.
 I took you to my heart to keep it warm
 When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not?

Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

Con. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me

And say 'she's old, she's grown unlovely quite

Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still.'

Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure.

Con. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the coming was not strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and go?
 I turned a half-look from my pedestal
 Where I grow marble—'one young man the more!

He will love some one,—that is nought to me:

What would he with my marble stateliness?

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to change—

We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began
 To labour at those state-affairs, absorbed
 The old way for the old end—interest.

Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
 Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
 Professing they've no care but for your cause,

Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,

And you the marble statue all the time
 They praise and point at as preferred to life,

Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,

First dancer's, gipsy's, or street baladine's!

Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech

Stified for fear it should alarm my ear,
 Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,

Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,

Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
 Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.

There have been moments, if the sentinel
 Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
 Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
 I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

Con. Who could have comprehended?

Queen. Ay, who—who?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.

Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps

It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

Con. I wait to tell it.

Queen. Well, you see, he came,
 Outfaced the others, did a work this year
 Exceeds in value all was ever done,
 You know—it is not I who say it—all
 Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
 I grew aware not only of what he did,
 But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
 Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—

It must have finer aims to lure it on!

I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.
 And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

Con. Me, madam?

Queen. It did seem to me, your face
 Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you

Was such a man to love? it seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved the love,

And so you both were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in the garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,

So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
That all this work should have been done
by him

Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose, some night like this—

Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
He might say, 'Give her hand and pay me so.'

And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)

I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—'And he shall have it. I will make her blest,

My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,

My happiest woman's self that might have been!

These two shall have their joy and leave me here.'

Yes—yes—

Con. Thanks!

Queen. And the word was on my lips

When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear

A mere calm statement of his just desire
For payment of his labour. When—O Heaven,

How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes
And thunder in my ears at that first word
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—

He loved me—from the first step to the last,

Loved me!

Con. You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke

Of love? what if you should mistake?

Queen. No, no—

No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!

He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
You were my reflex—(how I understood!)

He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love was the end of every phrase.

Love is begun—this much is come to pass,

The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours—
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have won.

Am I so old? this hair was early grey;

But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,

And joy will bring the cheek's red back,
I feel.

I could sing once too; that was in my youth.

Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,

Beautiful—for the last French painter did!

I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—

I trust you. How I loved you from the first!

Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out

And set her by their side to take the eye:

I must have felt that good would come from you.

I am not generous—like him—like you!
But he is not your lover after all—

It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?

You have not been mistaking words or looks!

He said you were the reflex of myself—
And yet he is not such a paragon

To you, to younger women who may choose

Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!

You know you never named his name to me—

You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,

Not up now, even to you!

Con. Then calm yourself.

Queen. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,

I will not play the fool, deceive myself;
'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside my cheek—

Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!

But then I set my life upon one chance.
The last chance and the best—am I not left,

My soul, myself? All women love great men

If young or old—it is in all the tales—
Young beauties love old poets who can love—

Why should not he, the poems in my soul,

The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,

The constancy? I throw them at his feet.

Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,

And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's

That pours the foam, makes rainbows all
 around?
 You could not praise indeed the empty
 conch;
 But I'll pour floods of love and hide
 myself.
 How I will love him! cannot men love
 love?
 Who was a queen and loved a poet once
 Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can
 do that!
 Well, but men too; at least, they tell you
 so.
 They love so many women in their youth,
 And even in age they all love whom they
 please;
 And yet the best of them confide to friends
 That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting
 love—
 They spend a day with such and tire the
 next;
 They like soul,—well then, they like
 phantasy,
 Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
 Horrible though it be—that prejudice,
 Prescription . . . curses! they will love a
 queen.
 They will—they do. And will not, does
 not—he?
Con. How can he? You are wedded
 —'tis a name
 We know, but still a bond. Your rank
 remains,
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly
 souled
 As you believe and I incline to think,
 Aspire to be your favorite, shame and
 all?
Queen. Hear her! there, there now—
 could she love like me?
 What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth
 and grace?
 See all it does or could do! so, youth
 loves!
 Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never
 do
 What I will—you, it was not born in! I
 Will drive these difficulties far and fast
 As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
 I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
 My youth from its enforced calamity,
 Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be
 his,
 His own in the eyes alike of God and
 man.
Con. You will do—dare do . . . pause
 on what you say!
Queen. Hear her! I thank you, Sweet,
 for that surprise.
 You have the fair face: for the soul,
 see mine!
 I have the strong soul: let me teach
 you, here.

I think I have borne enough and long
 enough,
 And patiently enough, the world re-
 marks,
 To have my own way now, unblamed by
 all.
 It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
 This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the
 knot.
 There's not a better way of settling
 claims
 Than this; God sends the accident ex-
 press:
 And were it for my subjects' good, no
 more,
 'Twere best thus ordered. I am thank-
 ful now,
 Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
 And bless God simply, or should almost
 fear
 To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
 Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
 How strong I am! could Norbert see
 me now!
Con. Let me consider. It is all too
 strange.
Queen. You, Constance, learn of me;
 do you, like me!
 You are young, beautiful: my own, best
 girl,
 You will have many lovers, and love
 one—
 Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to
 suit yours,
 And taller than he is, for yourself are
 tall.
 Love him, like me! give all away to
 him;
 Think never of yourself; throw by your
 pride,
 Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw
 it once,
 And love him simply for his very self.
 Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
 Would give up all for one, leave throne,
 lose life,
 Do all but just unlove him! He loves
 me.
Con. He shall.
Queen. You, step inside my
 inmost heart.
 Give me your own heart: let us have
 one heart.
 I'll come to you for counsel; 'this he
 says,
 This he does; what should this amount
 to, pray?
 Beseech you, change it into current coin.
 Is that worth kisses? shall I please him
 there?
 And then we'll speak in turn of you—
 what else?

Your love, according to your beauty's worth,
For you shall have some noble love, all gold:

Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.

—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,

I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:
Now, I would face the world with my new life,

With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,

And then come back and tell you how it feels.

How soon a smile of God can change the world!

How we are made for happiness—how work

Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years. What then?

Many remain: God has been very good.
You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams,

From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,

As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.

The comfort thou hast caused mankind,
God's moon!

[*She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE.*

Dance-music from within.

NORBERT *Enters*

Nor. Well! we have but one minute and one word.

Con. I am yours, Norbert!

Nor. Yes, mine.

Con. Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

Nor. Constance!

Con. Your own! I know the thriftier way

Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.

Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,

With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve

Exhaustless till the end my part and yours.
My giving and your taking; both our joys

Dying together. Is it the wiser way?

I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon!

Use it, abuse it,—anything but think

Hereafter, 'Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have thriven with it.'

This is your means. I give you all myself.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

Con. Look on through years!

We cannot kiss, a second day like this;

Else were this earth, no earth.

Nor.

With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.

Con.

So, best!

I try to see those years—I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes;
you look back

And lay all to the first glow—not sit down

For ever brooding on a day like this

While seeing the embers whiten and love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,

Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

Nor. Just so. I take and know you all at once.

Your soul is disengaged so easily,

Your face is there, I know you; give me time,

Let me be proud and think you shall know me.

My soul is slower: in a life I roll

The minute out whereto you condense yours—

The whole slow circle round you! I must move,

To be just you. I look to a long life

To decompose this minute, prove its worth.

'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one

Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed

In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,

If it lay ever unproved in your sight,

As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide

Its coldness, were it cold.

Con.

But how prove, how?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask?

Con.

Quick, Norbert—how?

Nor. That 's easy told. I count life just a stuff

To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.

Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.

As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength

alike,

So I will seize and use all means to prove

And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,

And justify us both.

Con.

Could you write books.
Paint pictures! one sits down in poverty

And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

Nor. And loves one's painting and one's writing, then,
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,

And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take
your face

And write of it and paint it—to what end?

For whom? what pale dictatress in the air

Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form

With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life

She makes despised for ever? You are mine,

Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,

The cold calm power to see how fair you look.

I come to you—I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there

Paint us

Con. So, best!

Nor.

I understand your soul.

You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success. This way is straight;

And days were short beside, to let me change

The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force the fruit

First for themselves, and afterward for me

In the due tithe; the task of some one man,

By ways of work appointed by themselves.

I am not bid create—they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.

What if it see, too, my first outbreak here

Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?

What if the people have discerned at length

The dawn of the next nature, the new man

Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,

And who, they trust, shall find them out new ways

To heights as new which yet he only sees?

I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,

This People—in our phrase, this mass of men—

See how the mass lies passive to my hand

And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!

My will be on this People! then, the strain,

The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the success
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,

While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance all recognize
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!

So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begin . . .

Con. I ever helping?

Nor.

Thus!

[*As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.*

Con. Hist, madam—so I have performed my part.

You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!

Begin, to end the sooner. What's a kiss?
Nor. Constance!

Con.

Why, must I teach it

you again?

You want a witness to your dullness, sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes long?
Then I repeat—when some young hand—
some man

Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
So very far beyond him, as he says—
So hopelessly in love, that but to speak
Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant
And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face—
When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,

—May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,

And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her

The confidant who brought the same about
—Why, in the moment when such joy
explodes,

I do hold that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-
horse,

Dismiss it with a 'There, enough of you!
Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, 'A tingling time of hope was ours;
Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two
lived

A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill!
And though I shall forget her in due time,
Her use being answered now, as reason
bids,

Nay as herself bids from her heart of
hearts,

Still, she has rights, the first thanks go
to her,

The first good praise goes to the pros-
perous tool,

And the first—which is the last—reward-
ing kiss.'

Nor. Constance? it is a dream—ah
see, you smile!

Con. So, now his part being properly
performed,

Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly; I do justice in my turn.

Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and
well;

He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I
Who served to prove your soul accessible.
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their
place

When else they had wandered out into
despair,

And kept love constant towards its nat-
ural aim.

Enough, my part is played; you stoop
half-way

And meet us royally and spare our fears:
'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
Take him—with my full heart! my work
is praised

By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—
Do all for him, much more than a mere
heart

Which though warm is not useful in its
warmth

As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
For him,—he knows his own part.

Nor. Have you done?
I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish
child,

Or did you but accept it? Well—at least
You lose by it.

Con. Nay, madam, 'tis your turn!
Restrain him still from speech a little more,
And make him happier and more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!
Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now! Here
I yield

My whole right in you to the Queen, ob-
serve!

With her go put in practice the great
schemes

You team with, follow the career else
closed—

Be all you cannot be except by her!
Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake

Anything—frankly say you love him!
Else

He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive: I know the
man.

Nor. I know the woman somewhat, and
confess

I thought she had jested better: she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam: where is my re-
ward?

Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom
I recognize

Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being
strange)

—May still be right: I may do well to
speak

And make authentic what appears a dream
To even myself. For, what she says, is
true—

Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now
of love,

Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall
say:

Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis
said.

Your courage helps mine: you did well
to speak

To-night, the night that crowns your
twelvemonths' toil—

But still I had not waited to discern
Your heart so long, believe me. From the
first

The source of so much zeal was almost
plain,

In absence even of your own words just
now

Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very
strange,

But takes a happy ending—in your love
Which mine meets: be it so: as you choose
me,

So I choose you.

Nor. And worthily you choose!
I will not be unworthy your esteem,

No, madam. I do love you; I will meet
Your nature, now I know it. This was
well.

I see,—you dare and you are justified:
But none had ventured such experiment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
Less confident of finding such in me.
I joy that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.
So—back again into my part's set words—
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance does.
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect—that 's myself—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the
ground.

I take this lady.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap—
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst
of all.

He is too cunning, madam! It was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Con-
stance? Then,

But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I might not pardon
here!

I am the Queen's: she only knows my
brain—

She may experiment therefore on my heart
And I instruct her too by the result.

But, you, Sweet, you who know me, who
so long

Have told my heart-beats over, held my
life

In those white hands of yours,—it is not
well!

Con. Tush! I have said it, did I not
say it all?

The life, for her—the heart-beats, for
her sake!

Nor. Enough! my cheek grows red, I
think. Your test?

There 's not the meanest woman in the
world,

Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove
itself,

I dared insult as you insult me now.

Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
'Take back the soul you offer—I keep
mine'

But—'Take the soul still quivering on
your hand,

The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some playful
friend,

For—what 's the trifle he requites me
with?'

I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,

That two may mock her heart if it suc-
cumb?

No! fearing God and standing 'neath His
heaven,

I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the
world,

And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!
Con. Norbert!

Nor. I love once as I live
but once.

What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all
Should such a step as this kill love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for
it.

But mine—could murdered love get up
again,

And kneel to whom you pleased to desig-
nate,

And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now
you know

That body and soul have each one life,
but one:

And here 's my love, here, living, at your
feet.

Con. See the Queen! Norbert—this
one more last word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—
thus

Loved me in earnest . . .

Nor. Ah, no jest holds here!
Where is the laughter in which jests break
up,

And what this horror that grows palpable?
Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?

Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the
truth?

How could I other? Was it not your test,
To try me, and what my love for Constance
meant?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus! so
one takes

A beggar—asks him what would buy his
child,

And then approves the expected laugh of
scorn

Returned as something noble from the
rags.

Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha,
what 's this?

You two glare each at each like panthers
now.

Constance, the world fades; only you stand
there!

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of
things,

Sell me—your soul of souls, for any
price?

No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.

Was it your love's mad trial to o'erstop

Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still —
 Though I should curse, I love you. I
 am love

And cannot change: love's self is at your
 feet. [*The QUEEN goes out.*]

Con. Feel my heart; let it die against
 your own!

Nor. Against my own! explain not; let
 this be.

This is life's height.

Con. Yours! Yours! Yours!

Nor. You and I —

Why care by what meanders we are here
 In the centre of the labyrinth? men have
 died

Trying to find this place, which we have
 found.

Con. Found, found!

Nor. Sweet, never fear
 what she can do!

We are past harm now.

Con. On the breast of God.
 I thought of men — as if you were a man.
 Tempting him with a crown!

Nor. This must end here —

It is too perfect!

Con. There 's the music stopped.
 What measured heavy tread? It is one
 blaze

About me and within me.

Nor. Oh, some death
 Will run its sudden finger round this
 spark

And sever us from the rest —

Con. And so do well.

Now the doors open —

Nor. 'Tis the guard comes.

Con. Kiss!

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

[1806-1861]

THE DESERTED GARDEN

[1838.]

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I;
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
That silk would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud!

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
A child would bring it all its praise
By creeping through the thorns!

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed:
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me!

Friends, blame me not! a narrow ken
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward;
We draw the moral afterward,
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall:
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white;
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories; till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees, nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round: anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are;
No more for me! myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray!

The time is past; and now that grows,
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven,—

Is something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

CONSOLATION

[1838.]

ALL are not taken; there are left behind
Living Belovèd, tender looks to bring
And make the daylight still a happy thing.
And tender voices, to make soft the wind:
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring
Where 'dust to dust' the love from life
disjoin'd;

And if, before those sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary
dearth)

Crying, 'Where are ye, O my loved and
loving?'—

I know a voice would sound, 'Daughter, I
AM.

Can I suffice for Heaven and not for
earth?"

GRIEF

[1844.]

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the mid-
night air

Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted
man, express

Grief for thy Dead in silence like to
death—

Most like a monumental statue set

In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

[1844.]

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my
brothers,

Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against
their mothers,

And that cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the mea-
dows,

The young birds are chirping in the nest.
The young fawns are playing with the
shadows,

The young flowers are blowing toward
the west—

But the young, young children, O my
brothers,

They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the
others,

In the country of the free.

Do you question the young chi'dren in the
sorrow

Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;

The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,

The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:

But the young, young children, O my
brothers,

Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their
mothers,

In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken
faces,

And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and
presses

Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,
Our young feet," they say, "are very
weak;

Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:

Ask the aged why they weep, and not the
children,

For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our
bewildering,

And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is
shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.

We looked into the pit prepared to take
her:

Was no room for any work in the close
clay!

From the sleep wherein she lieth none will
wake her,

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'

If you listen by that grave, in sun and
shower,

With your ear down, little Alice never
cries;

Could we see her face, be sure we should-
not know her,

For the smile has time for growing in
her eyes:

And merry go her moments, lulled and
stilled in

The shroud by the kirk-chime.

It is good when it happens," say the chil-
dren,

"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking

Death in life, as best to have:

They are binding up their hearts away from
breaking,

With a cerement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and from
the city,

Sing out, children, as the little thrushes
do;

Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cow-
slips pretty,

Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let
them through!

But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the
meadows

Like our weeds anear the mine?

Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-
shadows,

From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;

If we cared for any meadows, it were
merely

To drop down in them and sleep.

Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,

We fall upon our faces, trying to go;

And, underneath our heavy eyelids droop-
ing

The reddest flower would look as pale
as snow.

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring

Through the coal-dark, under-
ground;

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For all day the wheels are droning, turn-
ing;

Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses
burning,

And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window, blank

and reeling,

Turns the long light that drops adown
the wall,

Turn the black flies that crawl along the
ceiling:

All are turning, all the day, and we with
all.

And all day the iron wheels are droning,

And sometimes we could pray,

'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad
moaning),

'Stop! be silent for to-day!'

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other
breathing

For a moment, mouth to mouth!

Let them touch each other's hands, in a
fresh wreathing

Of their tender human youth!

Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or re-
veals:

Let them prove their living souls against the
notion

That they live in you, or under you, O
wheels!

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;

And the children's souls, which God is
calling sunward,

Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my
brothers,

To look up to Him and pray;

So the blessed One who blesseth all the
others,

Will bless them another day.

They answer, "Who is God that He should
hear us,

While the rushing of the iron wheels is
stirred?

When we sob aloud, the human creatures
near us

Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a
word.

And we hear not (for the wheels in their
resounding)

Strangers speaking at the door:

Is it likely God, with angels singing round
Him,

Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we re-
member,

And at midnight's hour of harm,

'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,

We say softly for a charm.

We know no other words except 'Our Father,'

And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,

God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,

And hold both within His right hand which is strong.

'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely

(For they call Him good and mild)

Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,

'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,

"He is speechless as a stone:

And they tell us, of His image is the master

Who commands us to work on.

Go to!" say the children,—"up in Heaven.

Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.

Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:

We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."

Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,

O my brothers, what ye preach?

For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,

And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!

They are weary ere they run;

They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory

Which is brighter than the sun.

They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;

They sink in man's despair, without its calm;

Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,

Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:

Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievably

The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—

Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.

Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,

And their look is dread to see,

For they mind you of their angels in high places,

With eyes turned on Deity.

"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,

Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,

And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,

And your purple shows your path!

But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper

Than the strong man in his wrath."

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

[Privately printed 1847. — Published 1850.]

I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,

Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:

And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,

The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had

flung

A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,

So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the

hair;

And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—

"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death," I said. But, there,

The silver answer rang,— "Not Death, but Love."

III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.

Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart

Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art

A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes

Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part

Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,

A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through

The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrim is on thine head,—on mine,

the dew,—

And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing, from the
care

Of watching up, thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too
poor

For hand of thine? and canst thou think
and bear

To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . .
alone, aloof.

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore—
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in
mine

With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee; as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when
I sue

God for myself, He hears that name of
thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII

The face of all the world is changed, I
think,

Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought
to sink,

Was caught up into love, and taught the
whole

Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee
anear.

The names of country, heaven, are changed
away

For where thou art or shalt be, there or
here;

And this . . . this lute and song . . .
loved yesterday,

(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they
say.

VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the
gold

And purple of thine heart, unstained, un-
told,

And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears
have run

The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her
way

Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes
brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Beloved,
may

Be changed, or change for thee,—and love,
so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love me
for

Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks
dry,—

A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love there-
by!

But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a
king,

Thou canst prevail against my fears and
fling

Thy purple round me, till my heart shall
grow

Too close against thine heart henceforth
to know

How it shook when alone. Why, conquer-
ing

May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!

And as a vanquished soldier yields his
sword

To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,

Here ends my strife. If thou invite me
forth,

I rise above abasement at the word.

Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XX

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sat alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence
sink

No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus
I drink

Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms
white

Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of
sight.

XXI

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word
repeated
Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost
treat it,

Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green
completed.

Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's
pain

Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!"
Who can fear

Too many stars, though each in heaven
shall roll,

Too many flowers, though each shall crown
the year?

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—
toll

The silver iterance—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII

When our two souls stand up erect and
strong,

Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and
nigher,

Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not
long

Be here contented? Think. In mounting
higher,

The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay

Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away

And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,

With darkness and the death-hour rounding
it.

XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly
shine

Because of grave-damps falling round my
head?

I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . . so much to thee? Can I pour
thy wine

While my hands tremble? Then my soul,
instead

Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower
range.

Then, love me, Love! Look on me—
breathe on me!

As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and ex-
change

My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth
with thee!

XXVI

I lived with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought
to know

A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent
grow,

And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst
come—to be,

Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining
fronts,

Their songs, their splendours (better, yet
the same,

As river-water hallowed into fonts),
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame

My soul with satisfaction of all wants:
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams
to shame.

XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose
the string

And let them drop down on my knee to-
night.

This said,—he wished to have me in his
sight

Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple
thing,

Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's
light . . .

Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and
quailed

As if God's future thundered on my past.

This said, *I am thine* — and so its ink has
 paled
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
 And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill
 availed
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

xxxii

The first time that the sun rose on thine
 oath
 To love me, I looked forward to the moon
 To slacken all those bonds which seemed
 too soon
 And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly
 loathe;
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
 For such man's love! — more like an out-
 of-tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
 To spoil his song with, and which, snatched
 in haste,
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
 A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may
 float
 'Neath master-hands, from instruments de-
 faced, —
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and
 doat.

xxxv

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
 And be all to me? Shall I never miss
 Home-talk and blessing and the common
 kiss
 That comes to each in turn, nor count it
 strange,
 When I look up, to drop on a new range
 Of walls and floors, another home than
 this?
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which
 is
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know
 change?
 That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
 To conquer grief, tries more, as all things
 prove;
 For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
 Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
 Yet love me — wilt thou? Open thine heart
 wide,
 And fold within the wet wings of thy
 dove.

xxxviii

First time he kissed me, he but only
 kissed
 The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
 And ever since, it grew more clean and
 white,
 Slow to world-greetings, quick with its
 "Oh, list,"

When the angels speak. A ring of ame-
 thyst
 I could not wear here, plainer to my
 sight,
 Than that first kiss. The second passed in
 height
 The first, and sought the forehead, and
 half missed,
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
 That was the chrism of love, which love's
 own crown,
 With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
 The third upon my lips was folded down
 In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
 I have been proud and said, "My love, my
 own."

xli

I thank all who have loved me in their
 hearts,
 With thanks and love from mine. Deep
 thanks to all
 Who paused a little near the prison-wall
 To hear my music in its louder parts
 Ere they went onward, each one to the
 mart's
 Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
 But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy
 foot
 To hearken what I said between my
 tears, . . .
 Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to
 shoot
 My soul's full meaning into future years,
 That *they* should lend it utterance, and
 salute
 Love that endures, from Life that dis-
 appears!

xliii

How do I love thee? Let me count the
 ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and
 height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of
 sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of everyday's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's
 faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints, — I love thee with the
 breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life! — and, if God
 choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

THE POET

[1850.]

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has
 viewed
 He views with the first glory. Fair and
 good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
 But stand before him holy and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as
 would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all His heavens, as
 soon
 As thou, O Godlike, childlike poet, didst
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and
 moon!
 And therefore hath he set thee in the midst
 Where men may hear thy wonder's cease-
 less tune
 And praise His world for ever, as thou
 bidst.

A COURT LADY

[1860.]

HER hair was tawny with gold, her eyes
 with purple were dark,
 Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and
 restless spark.
 Never was lady of Milan nobler in name
 and in race;
 Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in
 the face.
 Never was lady on earth more true as
 woman and wife,
 Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder
 in manners and life.
 She stood in the early morning, and said
 to her maidens "Bring
 That silken robe made ready to wear at the
 Court of the King.
 "Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid,
 clear of the mote,
 Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp
 me the small at the throat.
 "Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds
 to fasten the sleeves,
 Laces to drop from their rays, like a
 powder of snow from the eaves."
 Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which
 gathered her up in a flame,
 While, straight in her open carriage, she
 to the hospital came.
 In she went at the door, and gazing from
 end to end,
 "Many and low are the pallets, but each
 is the place of a friend."

Up she passed through the wards, and stood
 at a young man's bed:
 Bloody the band on his brow, and livid
 the droop of his head.

"Art thou a Lombard, my brother? Happy
 art thou," she cried,
 And smiled like Italy on him: he dreamed
 in her face and died.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on
 still to a second:
 He was a grave hard man, whose years
 by dungeons were reckoned.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in
 his life were sorer.
 "Art thou a Romagnole?" Her eyes drove
 lightnings before her.

"Austrian and priest had joined to double
 and tighten the cord
 Able to bind thee, O strong one, — free by
 the stroke of a sword.

"Now be grave for the rest of us, using the
 life overcast
 To ripen our wine of the present (too new)
 in glooms of the past."

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a
 face like a girl's,
 Young, and pathetic with dying, — a deep
 black hole in the curls.

"Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and
 seest thou, dreaming in pain,
 Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching
 the list of the slain?"

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his
 cheeks with her hands:
 "Blessed is she who has borne thee, al-
 though she should weep as she stands."

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm
 carried off by a ball:
 Kneeling, — "O more than my brother!
 how shall I thank thee for all?"

"Each of the heroes around us has fought
 for his land and line,
 But thou hast fought for a stranger, in
 hate of a wrong not thine.

"Happy are all free peoples, too strong to
 be dispossessed.
 But blessed are those among nations who
 dare to be strong for the rest!"

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a
 couch where pined
 One with a face from Venetia, white with
 a hope out of mind.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she
tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that
faltered and came.

Only a tear for Venice?—she turned as
in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it,
as if she were kissing the cross.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved
on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. "And dost
thou suffer, my brother?"

Holding his hand in hers:—"Out of the
Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom! sweetest
to live or to die on."

Holding his cold rough hands,—"Well, oh
well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not
be noble alone."

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to
her feet with a spring,—
"That was a Piedmontese! and this is the
Court of the King."

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

[1860.]

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a
goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river:
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan
While turbidly flowed the river;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient
reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god
Pan
(Laughed while he sat by the river),
"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the
reed,
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

MOTHER AND POET

(TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA, 1861.)

[1862.]

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the
east,
And one of them shot in the west by the
sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the
feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy
free,
Let none look at *me*!

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman, men
said;
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonised here,
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in
her head
For ever instead.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh,
vain!
What art is she good at, but hurting her
breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile
at the pain?
Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong
as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

What art's for a woman? To hold on her
knees
Both darlings! to feel all their arms
round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees
And broider the long-clothes and neat
little coat;
To dream and to doat.

To teach them . . . It stings there! *I*
made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country*. *I* taught
them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should die
for at need.

I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my
beautiful eyes! . . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the
wheels

Of the guns, and denied not. But then the
surprise

When one sits quite alone! Then one
weeps, then one kneels!

God, how the house feels!

At first, happy news came, in gay letters
moiled

With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory,
and how

They both loved me; and, soon coming
home to be spoiled

In return would fan off every fly from
my brow

With their green laurel-bough.

Then was triumph at Turin: "Ancona was
free!"

And some one came out of the cheers in
the street,

With a face pale as stone, to say something
to me.

My Guido was dead! *I* fell down at his
feet.

While they cheered in the street.

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief
looked sublime

As the ransom of Italy. One boy re-
mained

To be leant on and walked with, recalling
the time

When the first grew immortal, while both
of us strained

To the height he had gained.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more
strong,

Writ now but in one hand, "I was not to
faint,—

One loved me for two—would be with me
ere long:

And *Viva l' Italia!*—*he* died for, our
saint,

Who forbids our complaint."

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and
aware

Of a presence that turned off the balls,—
was imprest

It was Guido himself, who knew what *I*
could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispos-
sessed

To live on for the rest."

On which, without pause, up the telegraph-
line

Swept smoothly the next news from
Gaeta:—*Shot.*

Tell his mother. Ah, ah, "his," "their"
mother,—not "mine,"

No voice says "*My* mother" again to me.
What!

You think Guido forgot?

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy
with Heaven,

They drop earth's affections, conceive
not of woe?

I think not. Themselves were too lately
forgiven

Through *THAT* Love and Sorrow which
reconciled so

The Above and Below.

O Christ of the five wounds who look'dst
through the dark

To the face of Thy mother! consider, *I*
pray,

How we common mothers stand desolate,
mark,

Whose sons, not being Christs, die with
eyes turned away,

And no last word to say!

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature.
We all

Have been patriots, yet each house must
always keep one.

'Twere an imbecile, hewing out roads to a
wall;

And, when Italy's made, for what end is
it done

If we have not a son?

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair wicked queen sits no more

at her sport

Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls
out of men?

When the guns of Cavalli with final
retort

Have cut the game short?

When Venice and Rome keep their new
jubilee,

When your flag takes all heaven for its
white, green, and red,

When *you* have your country from moun-
tain to sea,

When King Victor has Italy's crown on
his head,

(And *I* have my Dead) —

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring
 your bells low,
 And burn your lights faintly! My coun-
 try is *there*,
 Above the star pricked by the last peak of
 snow:
 My Italy's *THERE*, with my brave civic
 Pair,
 To disfranchise despair!

Forgive me. Some women bear children
 in strength,
 And bite back the cry of their pain in
 self-scorn;

But the birth-pangs of nations will wring
 us at length
 Into wail such as this—and we sit on
 forlorn
 When the man-child is born.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the
 east,
 And one of them shot in the west by the
 sea.
 Both! both my boys! If in keeping the
 feast
 You want a great song for your Italy
 free,
 Let none look at *me*!

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

(1819-1861)

REVIVAL

[Composed 1839. — Published 1849.]

So I went wrong,
Grievously wrong, but folly crushed itself,
And vanity o'ertoppling fell, and time
And healthy discipline and some neglect,
Labour and solitary hours revived
Somewhat, at least, of that original frame.
Oh, well do I remember then the days
When on some grassy slope (what time
the sun
Was sinking, and the solemn eve came
down
With its blue vapour upon field and wood
And elm-embosomed spire) once more again
I fed on sweet emotion, and my heart
With love o'erflowed, or hushed itself in
fear
Unearthly, yea celestial. Once again
My heart was hot within me, and, me-
seemed,
I too had in my body breath to wind
The magic horn of song; I too possessed
Up-welling in my being's depths a fount
Of the true poet-nectar whence to fill
The golden urns of verse.

IN A LECTURE-ROOM

[Composed 1840. — Published 1849.]

AWAY, haunt thou not me,
Thou vain Philosophy!
Little hast thou bestead,
Save to perplex the head,
And leave the spirit dead.
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,
While from the secret treasure-depths be-
low,
Fed by the skyey shower,
And clouds that sink and rest on hill-tops
high,
Wisdom at once, and Power,
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, in-
cessantly?
Why labour at the dull mechanic oar,
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the strong current flowing,
Right onward to the Eternal Shore?

FROM BLANK MISGIVINGS

[Composed 1841. — Published 1849.]

NO. V

How OFTEN sit I, poring o'er
My strange distorted youth,
Seeking in vain, in all my store,
One feeling based on truth;

Amid the maze of petty life
A clue whereby to move,
A spot whereon in toil and strife
To dare to rest and love.
So constant as my heart would be,
So fickle as it must,
'Twere well for others as for me
'Twere dry as summer dust.
Excitements come, and act and speech
Flow freely forth; — but no,
Nor they, nor ought beside can reach
The buried world below.

τὸ καλόν

[Composed 1841. — Published 1849.]

I HAVE seen higher, holier things than
these,
And therefore must to these refuse my
heart.
Yet am I panting for a little ease;
I'll take, and so depart.

Ah, hold! the heart is prone to fall away,
Her high and cherished visions to forget,
And if thou takest, how wilt thou repay
So vast, so dread a debt?

How will the heart, which now thou trust-
est, then
Corrupt, yet in corruption mindful yet,
Turn with sharp stings upon itself! Again,
Bethink thee of the debt!

— Hast thou seen higher, holier things
than these,
And therefore must to these thy heart
refuse?
With the true best, alack, how ill agrees
That best that thou wouldst choose!

The Summum Pulchrum rests in heaven
above;
Do thou, as best thou mayst, thy duty
do:
Amid the things allowed thee live and
love;
Some day thou shalt it view.

QUA CURSUM VENTUS

[Published 1849.]

As SHIPS, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;

When fell the night, unsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side:

E'en so—but why the tale reveal
Of those, whom year by year unchanged,
Brief absence joined anew to feel,
Astounded, soul from soul estranged?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
And onward each rejoicing steered—
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared!

To veer, how vain! On, onward strain,
Brave barks! In light, in darkness too,
Through winds and tides one compass
guides—

To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze; and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last, unite them there!

THE NEW SINAI

[Composed 1845. — Published 1869.]

Lo, HERE is God, and there is God!
Believe it not, O Man;
In such vain sort to this and that
The ancient heathen ran:
Though old Religion shake her head,
And say in bitter grief,
The day behold, at first foretold,
Of atheist unbelief:
Take better part, with manly heart,
Thine adult spirit can;
Receive it not, believe it not,
Believe it not, O Man!

As men at dead of night awaked
With cries, 'The king is here,'
Rush forth and greet whome'er they meet,
Whoe'er shall first appear;
And still repeat, to all the street,
'Tis he,—the king is here,'
The long procession moveth on,
Each nobler form they see,
With changeful suit they still salute
And cry, 'Tis he, 'tis he!'

So, even so, when men were young,
And earth and heaven were new,
And His immediate presence He
From human hearts withdrew,
The soul perplexed and daily vexed
With sensuous False and True,

Amazed, bereaved, no less believed,
And fain would see Him too:
'He is!' the prophet-tongues proclaimed;
In joy and hasty fear,
'He is!' aloud replied the crowd,
'Is here, and here, and here.'

'He is! They are!' in distance seen
On yon Olympus high,
In those Avernian woods abide,
And walk this azure sky:
'They are! They are!'—to every show
Its eyes the baby turned,
And blazes sacrificial, tall,
On thousand altars burned:
'They are! They are!'—On Sinai's top
Far seen the lightnings shone,
The thunder broke, a trumpet spoke,
And God said, 'I am One.'

God spake it out, 'I, God, am One';
The unheeding ages ran,
And baby-thoughts again, again,
Have dogged the growing man:
And as of old from Sinai's top
God said that God is One,
By Science strict so speaks He now
To tell us, There is None!
Earth goes by chemic forces; Heaven's
A Mécanique Céleste!
And heart and mind of human kind
A watch-work as the rest!

Is this a Voice, as was the Voice,
Whose speaking told abroad,
When thunder pealed, and mountain reeled,
The ancient truth of God?
Ah, not the Voice; 'tis but the cloud,
The outer darkness dense,
Where image none, nor e'er was seen
Similitude of sense.
'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense
That wrapt the Mount around;
While in amaze the people stays,
To hear the Coming Sound.

Is there no prophet-soul the while
To dare, sublimely meek,
Within the shroud of blackest cloud
The Deity to seek?
'Midst atheistic systems dark,
And darker hearts' despair,
That soul has heard perchance His word,
And on the dusky air
His skirts, as passed He by, to see
Hath strained on their behalf,
Who on the plain, with dance amain,
Adore the Golden Calf.

'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense;
Though blank the tale it tells,
No God, no Truth! yet He, in sooth,
Is there—within it dwells;
Within the sceptic darkness deep
He dwells that none may see.

Till idol forms and idol thoughts
Have passed and ceased to be:
No God, no Truth! ah, though, in' sooth
So stand the doctrine's half:
On Egypt's track return not back,
Nor own the Golden Calf.

Take better part, with manlier heart,
Thine adult spirit can;
No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er —
Believe it ne'er — O Man!
But turn not then to seek again
What first the ill began;
No God, it saith; ah, wait in faith
God's self-completing plan;
Receive it not, but leave it not,
And wait it out, O Man!

'The Man that went the cloud within
Is gone and vanished quite;
He cometh not,' the people cries,
'Nor bringeth God to sight:
Lo these thy gods, that safety give,
Adore and keep the feast!'
Deluding and deluded cries
The Prophet's brother-Priest:
And Israel all bows down to fall
Before the gilded beast.

Devout, indeed! that priestly creed,
O Man, reject as sin;
The clouded hill attend thou still,
And him that went within.
He yet shall bring some worthy thing
For waiting souls to see:
Some sacred word that he hath heard
Their light and life shall be;
Some lofty part, than which the heart
Adopt no nobler can,
Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe
And thou shalt do, O Man!

THE QUESTIONING SPIRIT

[Composed 1847. — Published 1862.]

THE human spirits saw I on a day,
Sitting and looking each a different way;
And hardly tasking, subtly questioning,
Another spirit went around the ring
To each and each: and as he ceased his
say,
Each after each, I heard them singly sing,
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly
low,
We know not — what avails to know?
We know not — wherefore need we know?
This answer gave they still unto his suing.
We know not, let us do as we are doing.
Dost thou not know that these things only
seem? —
I know not, let me dream my dream.
Are dust and ashes fit to make a treas-
ure? —
I know not, let me take my pleasure.

What shall avail the knowledge thou hast
sought? —

I know not, let me think my thought.
What is the end of strife? —
I know not, let me live my life.
How many days or e'er thou mean'st to
move? —

I know not, let me love my love.
Were not things old once new? —
I know not, let me do as others do.
And when the rest were over past,
I know not, I will do my duty, said the
last.

Thy duty do? rejoined the voice,
Ah, do it, do it, and rejoice;
But shalt thou then, when all is done,
Enjoy a love, embrace a beauty
Like these, that may be seen and won
In life, whose course will then be run;
Or wilt thou be where there is none?
I know not, I will do my duty.

And taking up the word around, above,
below,
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly
low,

We know not, sang they all, nor ever need
we know;
We know not, sang they, what avails to
know?

Whereat the questioning spirit, some short
space,

Though unabashed, stood quiet in his place.
But as the echoing chorus died away
And to their dreams the rest returned
apace,

By the one spirit I saw him kneeling low,
And in a silvery whisper heard him say:
Truly, thou know'st not, and thou need'st
not know;

Hope only, hope thou, and believe alway;
I also know not, and I need not know,
Only with questionings pass I to and fro,
Perplexing these that sleep, and in their
folly

Imbreeding doubt and sceptic melancholy;
Till that, their dreams deserting, they with
me

Come all to this true ignorance and thee.

BETHESDA

A SEQUEL

[Composed 1849. — Published 1862.]

I SAW again the spirits on a day,
Where on the earth in mournful case they
lay;

Five porches were there, and a pool, and
round,
Huddling in blankets, strewn upon the
ground,

*Just after the first of the
libertine say of an amant
soul.*

Tied-up and bandaged, weary, sore, and spent,
The maimed and halt, diseased and impotent.
For a great angel came, 'twas said, and stirred
The pool at certain seasons, and the word
Was, with this people of the sick, that they
Who in the waters here their limbs should lay
Before the motion on the surface ceased
Should of their torment straightway be released.
So with shrunk bodies and with heads down-dropt,
Stretched on the steps, and at the pillars propt,
Watching by day and listening through the night,
They filled the place, a miserable sight.
And I beheld that on the stony floor
He too, that spoke of duty once before,
No otherwise than others here to-day,
Foredone and sick and sadly muttering lay.
'I know not, I will do — what is it I would say?
What was that word which once sufficed alone for all,
Which now I seek in vain, and never can recall?'
And then, as weary of in vain renewing
His question, thus his mournful thought pursuing,
'I know not, I must do as other men are doing.'
But what the waters of that pool might be,
Of Lethe were they, or Philosophy;
And whether he, long waiting, did attain
Deliverance from the burden of his pain
There with the rest; or whether, yet before,
Some more diviner stranger passed the door
With his small company into that sad place,
And breathing hope into the sick man's face,
Bade him take up his bed, and rise and go,
What the end were, and whether it were so,
Further than this I saw not, neither know.

FROM THE BOTHIE OF TOBER-NA-VUOLICH

(PART III, LINES 19-83.)

[Composed 1848. — Published 1848.]

THERE is a stream (I name not its name,
lest inquisitive tourist
Hunt it, and make it a lion, and get it at
last into guide-books),

Springing far off from a loch unexplored
in the folds of great mountains,
Falling two miles through rowan and
stunted alder, enveloped
Then for four more in a forest of pine,
where broad and ample
Spreads, to convey it, the glen with heath-
ery slopes on both sides:
Broad and fair the stream, with occasional
falls and narrows;
But, where the glen of its course ap-
proaches the vale of the river,
Met and blocked by a huge interposing
mass of granite,
Scarce by a channel deep-cut, raging up,
and raging onward,
Forces its flood through a passage so nar-
row a lady would step it.
There, across the great rocky wharves, a
wooden bridge goes.
Carrying a path to the forest; below, three
hundred yards, say,
Lower in level some twenty-five feet,
through flats of shingle,
Stepping-stones and a cart-track cross in
the open valley.
But in the interval here the boiling pent-
up water
Frees itself by a final descent, attaining a
basin,
Ten feet wide and eighteen long, with
whiteness and fury
Occupied partly, but mostly pellucid, pure,
a mirror;
Beautiful there for the colour derived from
green rocks under;
Beautiful, most of all, where beads of foam
uprising
Mingle their clouds of white with the
delicate hue of the stillness,
Cliff over cliff for its sides, with rowan and
pendent birch boughs,
Here it lies, unthought of above at the
bridge and pathway,
Still more enclosed from below by wood
and rocky projection.
You are shut in, left alone with yourself
and perfection of water,
Hid on all sides, left alone with yourself
and the goddess of bathing.
Here, the pride of the plunger, you stride
the fall and clear it;
Here, the delight of the bather, you roll
in beaded sparklings,
Here into pure green depth drop down
from lofty ledges.
Hither, a month ago, they had come,
and discovered it; hither
(Long a design, but long unaccountably left
unaccomplished),
Leaving the well-known bridge and path-
way above to the forest,
Turning below from the track of the carts
over stone and shingle,

Piercing a wood, and skirting a narrow and
 natural causeway
 Under the rocky wall that hedges the bed
 of the streamlet,
 Rounded a craggy point, and saw on a
 sudden before them
 Slabs of rock, and a tiny beach, and per-
 fection of water,
 Picture-like beauty, seclusion sublime, and
 the goddess of bathing.
 There they bathed, of course, and Arthur,
 the Glory of headers,
 Leapt from the ledges with Hope, he
 twenty feet, he thirty;
 There, overbold, great Hobbes from a
 ten-foot height descended,
 Prone, as a quadruped, prone with hands
 and feet protending;
 There in the sparkling champagne, ecstatic,
 they shrieked and shouted.
 'Hobbes's gutter' the Piper entitles the
 spot, profanely,
 Hope 'the Glory' would have, after Arthur,
 the Glory of headers:
 But, for before they departed, in shy and
 fugitive reflex,
 Here in the eddies and there did the splen-
 dour of Jupiter glimmer;
 Adam adjudged it the name of Hesperus,
 star of the evening.
 Hither, to Hesperus, now, the star of
 evening above them,
 Come in their lonelier walk the pupils twain
 and Tutor;
 Turned from the track of the carts, and
 passing the stone and shingle,
 Piercing the wood, and skirting the stream
 by the natural causeway,
 Rounded the craggy point, and now at
 their ease looked up; and
 Lo, on the rocky ledge, regardant, the
 Glory of headers,
 Lo, on the beach, expecting the plunge,
 not cigarless, the Piper,—
 And they looked, and wondered, incred-
 ulous, looking yet once more.
 Yes, it was he, on the ledge, bare-limbed,
 an Apollo, down-gazing,
 Eyeing one moment the beauty, the life, ere
 he flung himself in it,
 Eyeing through eddying green waters the
 green-tinted floor underneath them,
 Eyeing the bead on the surface, the bead,
 like a cloud rising to it,
 Drinking-in, deep in his soul, the beautiful
 hue and the clearness,
 Arthur, the shapely, the brave, the un-
 boasting, the Glory of headers;
 Yes, and with fragrant weed, by his knap-
 sack, spectator and critic,
 Seated on slab by the margin, the Piper,
 the Cloud-compeller.

EASTER DAY

NAPLES, 1849

[Published 1869.]

THROUGH the great sinful streets of Na-
 ples as I past,
 With fiercer heat than flamed above my
 head
 My heart was hot within me; till at last
 My brain was lightened when my tongue
 had said—
 Christ is not risen!
 Christ is not risen, no—
 He lies and moulders low;
 Christ is not risen!
 What though the stone were rolled away,
 and though
 The grave found empty there?—
 If not there, then elsewhere;
 If not where Joseph laid Him first, why
 then
 Where other men
 Translaid Him after, in some humbler clay.
 Long ere today
 Corruption that sad perfect work hath
 done,
 Which here she scarcely, lightly had begun:
 The foul engendered worm
 Feeds on the flesh of the life-giving form
 Of our most Holy and Anointed One.
 He is not risen, no—
 He lies and moulders low;
 Christ is not risen!
 What if the women, ere the dawn was grey,
 Saw one or more great angels, as they say
 (Angels, or Him himself)? Yet neither
 there, nor then,
 Nor afterwards, nor elsewhere, nor at all,
 Hath He appeared to Peter or the Ten;
 Nor, save in thunderous terror, to bind
 Saul;
 Save in an after Gospel and late Creed,
 He is not risen, indeed,—
 Christ is not risen!
 Or, what if e'en, as runs a tale, the Ten
 Saw, heard, and touched, again and yet
 again?
 What if at Emmaüs' inn, and by Caper-
 naum's Lake,
 Came One, the bread that brake—
 Came One that spake as never mortal spake,
 And with them ate, and drank, and stood,
 and walked about?
 Ah! 'some' did well to 'doubt'!
 Ah! the true Christ, while these things
 came to pass,
 Nor heard, nor spake, nor walked, nor
 lived, alas!
 He was not risen, no—
 He lay and mouldered low,
 Christ was not risen!

As circulates in some great city crowd
 A rumour changeful, vague, importunate,
 and loud,
 From no determined centre, or of fact
 Or authorship exact,
 Which no man can deny
 Nor verify;
 So spread the wondrous fame;
 He all the same
 Lay senseless, mouldering, low:
 He was not risen, no—
 Christ was not risen!

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
 As of the unjust, also of the just—
 Yea, of that Just One, too!
 This is the one sad Gospel that is true—
 Christ is not risen!

Is He not risen, and shall we not rise?
 Oh, we unwise!
 What did we dream, what wake we to discover?
 Ye hills, fall on us, and ye mountains,
 cover!
 In darkness and great gloom
 Come ere we thought it is *our* day of
 doom;
 From the cursed world, which is one tomb,
 Christ is not risen!

Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is
 bliss:
 There is no heaven but this;
 There is no hell,
 Save earth, which serves the purpose doubly
 well,
 Seeing it visits still
 With equallest apportionment of ill
 Both good and bad alike, and brings to
 one same dust
 The unjust and the just
 With Christ, who is not risen.

Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls be-
 reaved:
 Of all the creatures under heaven's wide
 cope
 We are most hopeless, who had once
 most hope,
 And most beliefless, that had most believed.
 Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
 As of the unjust, also of the just—
 Yea, of that Just one too!
 It is the one sad Gospel that is true—
 Christ is not risen!

Weep not beside the tomb,
 Ye women, unto whom
 He was great solace while ye tended Him;
 Ye who with napkin o'er the head
 And folds of linen round each wounded
 limb
 Laid out the Sacred Dead;
 And thou that bar'st Him in thy wonder-
 ing womb;

Yea, Daughters of Jerusalem, depart,
 Bind up as best ye may your own sad
 bleeding heart:
 Go to your homes, your living children
 tend,
 Your earthly spouses love;
 Set your affections *not* on things
 above,
 Which moth and rust corrupt, which quick-
 liest come to end:
 Or pray, if pray ye must, and pray, if pray
 ye can,
 For death; since dead is He whom ye
 deemed more than man,
 Who is not risen: no—
 But lies and moulders low—
 Who is not risen!

Ye men of Galilee!
 Why stand ye looking up to heaven, where
 Him ye ne'er may see,
 Neither ascending hence, nor returning
 hither again?
 Ye ignorant and idle fishermen!
 Hence to your huts, and boats, and inland
 native shore,
 And catch not men, but fish;
 Whate'er things ye might wish,
 Him neither here nor there ye e'er shall
 meet with more.
 Ye poor deluded youths, go home,
 Mend the old nets ye left to roam,
 Tie the split oar, patch the torn sail:
 It was indeed an 'idle tale'—
 He was not risen!

And, oh, good men of ages yet to be,
 Who shall believe *because* ye did not
 see—
 Oh, be ye warned, be wise!
 No more with pleading eyes,
 And sobs of strong desire,
 Unto the empty vacant void aspire,
 Seeking another and impossible birth
 That is not of your own, and only mother
 earth.
 But if there is no other life for you,
 Sit down and be content, since this must
 even do:
 He is not risen!
 One look, and then depart,
 Ye humble and ye holy men of heart;
 And ye! ye ministers and stewards of a
 Word
 Which ye would preach, because another
 heard—
 Ye worshippers of that ye do not
 know,
 Take these things hence and go:—
 He is not risen!

Here, on our Easter Day
 We rise, we come, and lo! we find Him
 not,
 Gardener nor other, on the sacred spot:

Where they have laid Him there is none
to say;
No sound, nor in, nor out — no word
Of where to seek the dead or meet the liv-
ing Lord.
There is no glistening of an angel's wings,
There is no voice of heavenly clear behest:
Let us go hence, and think upon these
things
In silence, which is best.
Is He not risen? No—
But lies and moulders low?
Christ is not risen?

EASTER DAY

II

[Published 1869.]

So IN the sinful streets, abstracted and
alone,
I with my secret self held communing of
mine own.
So in the southern city spake the tongue
Of one that somewhat overwildly sung,
But in a later hour I sat and heard
Another voice that spake — another graver
word.
Weep not, it bade, whatever hath been said,
Though He be dead, He is not dead.
In the true creed
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.
Weep not beside His tomb,
Ye women unto whom
He was great comfort and yet greater grief;
Nor ye, ye faithful few that wont with
Him to roam,
Seek sadly what for Him ye left, go hope-
less to your home;
Nor ye despair, ye sharers yet to be of
their belief;
Though He be dead, He is not
dead,
Nor gone, though fled,
Not lost, though vanished;
Though He return not, though
He lies and moulders low;
In the true creed
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.
Sit if ye will, sit down upon the ground,
Yet not to weep and wail, but calmly look
around.
Whate'er befell,
Earth is not hell;
Now, too, as when it first began,
Life is yet life, and man is man.
For all that breathe beneath the heaven's
high cope,
Joy with grief mixes, with despondence
hope.

Hope conquers cowardice, joy grief:
Or at least, faith unbelief.
Though dead, not dead;
Not gone, though fled;
Not lost, though vanished.
In the great gospel and true creed,
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

FROM DIPSYCHUS

[Composed 1849. — Published 1862.]

'There is no God,' the wicked saith,
'And truly it's a blessing,
For what He might have done with us
It's better only guessing.'

'There is no God,' a youngster thinks,
'Or really, if there may be,
He surely didn't mean a man
Always to be a baby.'

'There is no God, or if there is,'
The tradesman thinks, 'twere funny
If He should take it ill in me
To make a little money.'

'Whether there be,' the rich man says,
'It matters very little,
For I and mine, thank somebody,
Are not in want of victual.'

Some others, also, to themselves,
Who scarce so much as doubt it,
Think there is none, when they are well,
And do not think about it.

But country folks who live beneath
The shadow of the steeple;
The parson and the parson's wife,
And mostly married people;

Youths green and happy in first love,
So thankful for illusion;
And men caught out in what the world
Calls guilt, in first confusion;

And almost every one when age,
Disease, or sorrows strike him,
Inclines to think there is a God,
Or something very like Him.

SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILABLE

[Composed 1849. — Published 1862.]

SAY not the struggle nought available,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

AH! YET CONSIDER IT AGAIN!

[Composed 1851. — Published 1862.]

'OLD things need not be therefore true,'
O brother men, nor yet the new;
Ah! still awhile the old thought retain,
And yet consider it again!

The souls of now two thousand years
Have laid up here their toils and fears,
And all the earnings of their pain, —
Ah, yet consider it again!

We! what do we see? each a space
Of some few yards before his face;
Does that the whole wide plan explain?
Ah, yet consider it again!

Alas! the great world goes its way,
And takes its truth from each new day;
They do not quit, nor can retain,
Far less consider it again.

FROM SONGS IN ABSENCE

[Composed 1852. — Published 1862.]

YE flags of Piccadilly,
Where I posted up and down,
And wished myself so often
Well away from you and town, —

Are the people walking quietly
And steady on their feet,
Cabs and omnibuses plying
Just as usual in the street?

Do the houses look as upright
As of old they used to be,
And does nothing seem affected
By the pitching of the sea?

Through the Green Park iron railings
Do the quick pedestrians pass?
Are the little children playing
Round the plane-tree in the grass?

This squally wild north-wester
With which our vessel fights,
Does it merely serve with you to
Carry up some paper kites?

YE flags of Piccadilly,
Which I hated so, I vow
I could wish with all my heart
You were underneath me now!

SOME future day when what is now is not,
When all old faults and follies are forgot,
And thoughts of difference passed like
dreams away,
We'll meet again, upon some future day.

When all that hindered, all that vexed our
love,
As tall rank weeds will climb the blade
above,
When all but it has yielded to decay,
We'll meet again upon some future day.

When we have proved, each on his course
alone,
The wider world, and learnt what's now
unknown,
Have made life clear, and worked out each
a way,
We'll meet again, — we shall have much
to say.

With happier mood, and feelings born
anew,
Our boyhood's bygone fancies we'll review,
Talk o'er old talks, play as we used to play,
And meet again, on many a future day.

Some day, which oft our hearts shall yearn
to see,
In some far year, though distant yet to be,
Shall we indeed, — ye winds and waters,
say! —
Meet yet again, upon some future day?

WHERE lies the land to which the ship
would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from?
Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

On sunny noons upon the deck's smooth
face,
Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to
pace;
Or, o'er the stern reclining, watch below
The foaming wake far widening as we go.

On stormy nights when wild north-western
rave,
How proud a thing to fight with wind and
wave!
The dripping sailor on the reeling mast
Exults to bear, and scorns to wish it
past.

Where lies the land to which the ship
would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from?
Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

HOPE EVERMORE AND BELIEVE!

[Published 1862.]

HOPE evermore and believe, O man, for e'en
as thy thought
So are the things that thou see'st; e'en
as thy hope and belief.
Cowardly art thou and timid? they rise to
provoke thee against them;
Hast thou courage? enough, see them
exulting to yield.
Yea, the rough rock, the dull earth, the
wild sea's fuming waters
(Violent say'st thou and hard, mighty
thou think'st to destroy),
All with ineffable longing are waiting their
Invader,
All, with one varying voice, call to him,
Come and subdue;
Still for their Conqueror call, and, but for
the joy of being conquered
(Rapture they will not forego), dare to
resist and rebel;
Still, when resisting and raging, in soft
undervoice say unto him,
Fear not, retire not, O man; hope ever-
more and believe.
Go from the east to the west, as the sun
and the stars direct thee,
Go with the girdle of man, go and
encompass the earth.
Not for the gain of the gold; for the
getting, the hoarding, the having,
But for the joy of the deed; but for the
Duty to do.
Go with the spiritual life, the higher vo-
lition and action.
With the great girdle of God, go and
encompass the earth.
Go; say not in thy heart, And what then
were it accomplished,
Were the wild impulse allayed, what
were the use or the good!
Go, when the instinct is stilled, and when
the deed is accomplished,
What thou hast done and shalt do, shall
be declared to thee then.
Go with the sun and the stars, and yet
evermore in thy spirit
Say to thyself: It is good: yet is there
better than it.
This that I see is not all, and this that
I do is but little;
Nevertheless it is good, though there is
better than it.

QUI LABORAT, ORAT

[Published 1862.]

O ONLY Source of all our light and life,
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see
and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone aright reveal!

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;
Chastised each rebel self-enclosed thought,
My will adareth Thine.

With eye down-dropt, if then this earthly
mind
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en de-
part;
Nor seek to see — for what of earthly kind
Can see Thee as Thou art? —

If well-assured 'tis but profanely bold
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to
see,
It dare not dare the dread communion hold
In ways unworthy Thee,

O not unowned, Thou shalt unnamed for-
give,
In worldly walks the prayerless heart
prepare;
And if in work its life it seem to live,
Shalt make that work be prayer.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work
it plies,
Unsummoned powers the blinding film
shall part,
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the
eyes
In recognition start.

But, as thou willest, give or e'en forbear
The beatific supersensual sight,
So, with Thy blessing blessed, that hum-
bler prayer
Approach Thee morn and night.

THE LATEST DECALOGUE

[Published 1862.]

THOU shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honour thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall:
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

'WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABLE-
NESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF
TURNING'

[Published 1862.]

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so:
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

[Published 1862.]

WHAT we, when face to face we see
The Father of our souls, shall be,
John tells us, doth not yet appear;
Ah! did he tell what we are here!

A mind for thoughts to pass into,
A heart for loves to travel through,
Five senses to detect things near,
Is this the whole that we are here?

Rules baffle instincts—instincts rules,
Wise men are bad—and good are fools,
Facts evil—wishes vain appear,
We cannot go, why are we here?

O may we for assurance' sake,
Some arbitrary judgment take,
And wilfully pronounce it clear,
For this or that 'tis we are here?

Or is it right, and will it do,
To pace the sad confusion through,
And say:—it doth not yet appear,
What we shall be, what we are here?

Ah yet, when all is thought and said,
The heart still overrules the head;
Still what we hope we must believe,
And what is given us receive;

Must still believe, for still we hope
That in a world of larger scope,
What here is faithfully begun
Will be completed, not undone.

My child, we still must think, when we
That ampler life together see,
Some true result will yet appear
Of what we are, together, here.

ITE DOMUM SATURÆ, VENIT
HESPERUS

[Published 1862.]

THE skies have sunk, and hid the upper
snow

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie),

The rainy clouds are filing fast below,
And wet will be the path, and wet shall we.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

Ah dear, and where is he, a year ago,
Who stepped beside and cheered us on and
on?

My sweetheart wanders far away from me,
In foreign land or on a foreign sea.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

The lightning zigzags shoot across the sky
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie),

And through the vale the rains go sweeping
by;

Ah me, and when in shelter shall we be?
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

Cold, dreary cold, the stormy winds feel
they

O'er foreign lands and foreign seas that
stray

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie).

And doth he e'er, I wonder, bring to mind
The pleasant huts and herds he left behind?
And doth he sometimes in his slumbering
see

The feeding kine, and doth he think of me,
My sweetheart wandering wheresoe'er it
be?

Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

The thunder bellows far from snow to
snow

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie),

And loud and louder roars the flood below.
Heigho! but soon in shelter shall we be:
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

Or shall he find before his term be sped,
Some comelier maid that he shall wish to
wed?

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie),

For weary is work, and weary day by day
To have your comfort miles on miles away.
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

Or may it be that I shall find my mate,
And he returning see himself too late?

For work we must, and what we see, we
see,

And God, He knows, and what must be,
must be,

When sweethearts wander far away from
me.

Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie.

The sky behind is brightening up anew
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La
Palie),

The rain is ending, and our journey too:
Heigho! ahal for here at home are we:—
In, Rose, and in, Provence and La Palie.

THE HIDDEN LOVE

[Published 1869.]

O LET me love my love unto myself alone,
And know my knowledge to the world un-
known;
No witness to my vision call,
Beholding, unhehld of all;
And worship Thee, with Thee withdrawn
apart,
Whoe'er, Whate'er Thou art,
Within the closest veil of mine own inmost
heart.

What is it then to me
If others are inquisitive to see?
Why should I quit my place to go and ask
If other men are working at their task?
Leave my own buried roots to go
And see that brother plants shall grow;
And turn away from Thee, O Thou most
Holy Light,
To look if other orbs their orbits keep
aright,
Around their proper sun,
Deserting Thee, and being undone.

O let me love my love unto myself alone,
And know my knowledge to the world un-
known;
And worship Thee, O hid One, O much
sought,
As but man can or ought,
Within the abstracted'st shrine of my least
breathed-on thought.

Better it were, thou sayest, to consent;
Feast while we may, and live ere life be
spent;
Close up clear eyes, and call the unstable
sure,
The unlovely lovely, and the filthy pure;
In self-belyings, self-deceivings roll,
And lose in Action, Passion, Talk, the soul.

Nay, better far to mark off thus much air,
And call it Heaven: place bliss and glory
there;
Fix perfect homes in the unsubstantial sky,
And say, what is not, will be by and by.

'PERCHÈ PENSA? PENSANDO S'INVECCHIA'

[Published 1869.]

To SPEND uncounted years of pain,
Again, again, and yet again,
In working out in heart and brain
The problem of our being here;
To gather facts from far and near,
Upon the mind to hold them clear,
And, knowing more may yet appear,
Unto one's latest breath to fear,
The premature result to draw—
Is this the object, end and law,
And purpose of our being here?

LIFE IS STRUGGLE

[Published 1869.]

To wear out heart, and nerves, and brain,
And give oneself a world of pain;
Be eager, angry, fierce, and hot,
Imperious, supple—God knows what,
For what's all one to have or not;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,
It is not in itself a bliss,
Only it is precisely this
That keeps us all alive.

To say we truly feel the pain,
And quite are sinking with the strain;—
Entirely, simply, undeceived,
Believe, and say we ne'er believed
The object, e'en were it achieved,
A thing we e'er had cared to keep;
With heart and soul to hold it cheap,
And then to go and try it again;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
O, 'tis not joy, and 'tis not bliss,
Only it is precisely this
That keeps us still alive.

ALL IS WELL

[Published 1869.]

WHATE'ER you dream with doubt possess,
Keep, keep it snug within your breast,
And lay you down and take your rest;
Forget in sleep the doubt and pain,
And when you wake, to work again.
The wind it blows, the vessel goes,
And where and whither, no one knows.

'Twill all be well: no need of care;
Though how it will, and when, and where,
We cannot see, and can't declare.
In spite of dreams, in spite of thought,
'Tis not in vain, and not for nought,
The wind it blows, the ship it goes,
Though where and whither, no one knows.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

(1822-1888)

SONNET

[1849.]

ONE lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee —
One lesson which in every wind is blown;
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their
enmity —

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,

Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords
ring,

Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting:
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil;

Labourers that shall not fail, when man is
gone.

MYCERINUS

[1849.]

'After Chephren, Mycerinus, son of Cheops, reigned over Egypt. He abhorred his father's courses, and judged his subjects more justly than any of their kings had done. — To him there came an oracle from the city of Buto, to the effect, that he was to live but six years longer, and to die in the seventh year from that time.'—HERODOTUS.

'Nor by the justice that my father spurn'd,
Not for the thousands whom my father
slew,

Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,
Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where
thanks were due;

Fell this late voice from lips that cannot
lie,

Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime
Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of
Law;

Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;
Crown'd with grey hairs he died, and full
of sway.

I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated
wrong:

The Gods declare my recompense to-day.

I look'd for life more lasting, rule more
high;

And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was
given:

A light that from some upper fount did
beam,

Some better archetype, whose seat was
heaven;

A light that, shining from the blest abodes,
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting
heart,

Which on the sweets that woo it dares not
feed:

Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures,
then depart,

When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims
its meed:

When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven
bestows,

Crown of his struggling life, an unjust
close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere Pow-
ers,

To spurn man's common lure, life's pleas-
ant things?

Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with
flowers,

Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

Or is it that some Power, too wise, too
strong,

Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and
gods along,

Like the broad rushing of the insurg'd
Nile?

And the great powers we serve, themselves
may be

Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden
cars,

Where earthly voice climbs never, wing
their flight,

And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of
stars,

Sweep in the sounding stillness of the
night?

Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling
sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell
serene!

Oh wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant
dream?

Stringing vain words of powers we cannot
see,
Blind divinations of a will supreme;
Lost labour: when the circumambient
gloom
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our
doom?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I
speak
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot
ray,
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers
pale and weak,
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;
Even so do past and future intertwine,
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is
mine.

Six years—six little years—six drops of
time—
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall
wane,
And old men die, and young men pass their
prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower
again;
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are
flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their
own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods
I will go forth; but something would I
say—
Something—yet what I know not: for the
Gods
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are
fruitless all,
And the night waxes, and the shadows
fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your
king.
I go, and I return not. But the will
Of the great Gods is plain; and ye must
bring
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap
their praise.
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length
of days'.

—So spake he, half in anger, half in
scorn;
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze

Broke from his sorrowing people: so he
spake;
And turning, left them there; and with
brief pause,
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his
way

To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.

There by the river banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy
trees,

Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and
beneath

Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and
flowers:

Where in one dream the feverish time of
Youth

Might fade in slumber, and the feet of
Joy

Might wander all day long and never tire:
Here came the king, holding high feast.
at morn,

Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun
went down,

A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil
gloom,

From tree to tree, all through the twinkling
grove,

Revealing all the tumult of the feast,
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd
with wine;

While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.

It may be that sometimes his wondering
soul

From the loud joyful laughter of his
lips

Might shrink half startled, like a guilty
man

Who wrestles with his dream; as some
pale Shape,

Gliding half hidden through the dusky
stems,

Would thrust a hand before the lifted
bowl,

Whispering, 'A little space, and thou art
mine.'

It may be on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he,

within,

Took measure of his soul, and knew its
strength,

And by that silent knowledge, day by day,
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sus-
tain'd.

It may be; but not less his brow was
smooth,

And his clear laugh fled ringing through
the gloom,

And his mirth quail'd not at the mild
reproof

Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and
died

In the rich languor of long summer days;
 Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes
 that roof'd
 With their mild dark his grassy banquet-
 hall,
 Bent to the cold winds of the showerless
 Spring;
 No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought
 the clouds.
 So six long years he revell'd, night and
 day;
 And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with
 dull sound
 Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes
 came,
 To tell his wondering people of their king;
 In the still night, across the steaming
 flats,
 Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

TO A FRIEND

[1849.]

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days,
 my mind?
 He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd
 of men,
 Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian
 Fen,
 And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though
 blind.
 Much he, whose friendship I not long since
 won,
 That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
 Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal
 son
 Clear'd Rome of what most sham'd him.
 But be his
 My special thanks, whose even-balanc'd
 soul,
 From first youth tested up to extreme old
 age,
 Business could not make dull, nor Passion
 wild:
 Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole:
 The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
 Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

[1849.]

HUSSEIN

O most just Vizier, send away
 The cloth-merchants, and let them be.
 Them and their dues, this day: the King
 Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

THE VIZIER

O merchants, tarry yet a day
 Here in Bokhara: but at noon
 To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay
 Each fortieth web of cloth to me,
 As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King.
 Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,
 Ferdousi's, and the others', lead.
 How is it with my lord?

HUSSEIN

Alone

Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,
 O Vizier, without lying down,
 In the great window of the gate,
 Looking into the Registràn:
 Where through the sellers' booths the
 slaves
 Are this way bringing the dead man.
 O Vizier, here is the King's door.

THE KING

O Vizier, I may bury him?

THE VIZIER

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick
 These many days, and heard no thing,
 (For Allah shut my ears and mind)
 Not even what thou dost, O King.
 Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,
 Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste
 To speak in order what hath chanc'd.

THE KING

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

HUSSEIN

Three days since, at the time of prayer,
 A certain Moollah, with his robe
 All rent, and dust upon his hair,
 Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd
 The golden mace-bearers aside,
 And fell at the King's feet, and cried,
 'Justice, O King, and on myself!
 On this great sinner, who hath broke
 The law, and by the law must die!
 Vengeance, O King!'

But the King spoke:

'What fool is this, that hurts our ears
 With folly? or what drunken slave?
 My guards, what, prick him with your
 spears!
 Prick me the fellow from the path!'
 As the King said, so was it done,
 And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King
 Went forth again, the holy book
 Carried before him, as is right,
 And through the square his path he took;
 My man comes running, fleck'd with blood
 From yesterday, and falling down
 Cries out most earnestly: 'O King,
 My lord, O King, do right, I pray!

'How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern
 If I speak folly? but a king,
 Whether a thing be great or small,
 Like Allah, hears and judges all.

'Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st, how
fierce

In these last days the sun hath burn'd:
That the green water in the tanks
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd:
And the canal, that from the stream
Of Samarcand is brought this way
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

'Now I at nightfall had gone forth
Alone, and in a darksome place
Under some mulberry trees I found
A little pool; and in brief space
With all the water that was there
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home
Unseen: and having drink to spare,
I hid the can behind the door,
And went up on the roof to sleep.

'But in the night, which was with wind
And burning dust, again I creep
Down, having fever, for a drink.

'Now meanwhile had my brethren found
The water-pitcher, where it stood
Behind the door upon the ground,
And call'd my mother: and they all,
As they were thirsty, and the night
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there;
That they sate with it, in my sight,
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

'Now mark! I, being fever'd, sick,
(Most unblest also) at that sight
Brake forth and curs'd them—dost thou
hear?—

One was my mother—Now, do right!

But my lord mus'd a space, and said:
'Send him away, Sirs, and make on.
It is some madman,' the King said:
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow at the self-same hour
In the King's path, behold, the man,
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd: he stood
Right opposite, and thus began,
Frowning grim down:—'Thou wicked
King,
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give
ear!

What, must I howl in the next world,
Because thou wilt not listen here?

'What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd?
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path
I will not stir till I be judg'd.'

Then they who stood about the King
Drew close together and conferr'd:
Till that the King stood forth and said,
'Before the priests thou shalt be heard.'

But when the Ulemas were met
And the thing heard, they doubted not;
But sentenc'd him, as the law is,
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charg'd us secretly:
'Ston'd must he be, the law stands so:
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way:
Forbid him not, but let him go.'

So saying, the King took a stone,
And cast it softly: but the man,
With a great joy upon his face,
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones;
That they flew thick, and bruise'd him sore:
But he prais'd Allah with loud voice,
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had covered up his face:
But when one told him, 'He is dead,'
Turning him quickly to go in.
'Bring thou to me his corpse,' he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,
I hear the bearers on the stair.
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in?
— Ho! enter ye who tarry there!

THE VIZIER

O King, in this I praise thee not.
Now must I call thy grief not wise.
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,
To find such favour in thine eyes?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.
It were not meet the balance swerv'd,
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,
Why for no cause make sad thy face?
Lo, I am old: three kings, ere thee,
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,
Could bear the burden of his years,
If he for strangers pain'd his heart
Not less than those who merit tears?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child;
And grievous is the grief for these:
This pain alone, which *must* be borne,
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own
One man is not well made to bear.
Besides, to each are his own friends,
To mourn with him, and show him care.

Look, this is but one single place,
Though it be great: all the earth round,
If a man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be
found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where
The watchers of two armies stand
Near one another, many a man,
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave:
 They snatch also, towards Mervè,
 The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,
 And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,
 Eat not the fruit of their own hands:
 Which is the heaviest of all plagues,
 To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse!)
 Vex one another, night and day:
 There are the lepers, and all sick:
 There are the poor, who faint away.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,
 Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.
 Wilt thou have pity on all these?
 No, nor on this dead dog, O King!

THE KING

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.
 Clear in these things I cannot see.
 My head is burning; and a heat
 Is in my skin, which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!
 They that bear rule, and are obey'd,
 Unto a rule more strong than theirs
 Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes
 Gazing up hither, the poor man,
 Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,
 Below there, in the Registân,

Says, 'Happy he, who lodges there!
 With silken raiment, store of rice,
 And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,
 Grape syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

'With cherries serv'd in drifts of snow.'
 In vain hath a king power to build
 Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques;
 And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, bought from far;
 With cisterns for the winter rain;
 And in the desert, spacious inns
 In divers places;—if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,
 If his will be not satisfied:
 And that it be not, from all time
 The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man!
 Thou wert athirst; and didst not see,
 That, though we snatch what we desire,
 We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,
 And rooms of treasures, not a few.
 But I am sick, nor heed I these:
 And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,
 When I am dead, will soon grow still.
 So have I neither joy, nor fame.
 But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb
 Upon a hill on the right hand,
 Hard by a close of apricots,
 Upon the road of Samarcand.

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear
 This man my pity could not save:
 And, tearing up the marble flags,
 There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.
 Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb,
 Then say: 'He was not wholly vile,
 Because a king shall bury him.'

SHAKESPEARE

[1849.]

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
 We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
 Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest
 hill

That to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
 Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,
 Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwell-
 ing-place,

Spares but the cloudy border of his base
 To the foil'd searching of mortality:
 And thou, who didst the stars and sun-
 beams know,
 Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd,
 self-secure,
 Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better
 so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
 All weakness that impairs, all griefs that
 bow,
 Find their sole voice in that victorious
 brow.

TO AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER

WHO PREACHED THAT WE SHOULD BE 'IN
 HARMONY WITH NATURE'

[1849.]

'In harmony with Nature?' Restless fool,
 Who with such heat dost preach what
 were to thee,

When true, the last impossibility;
 To be like Nature strong, like Nature
 cool:—

Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but
 more,

And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
 Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
 Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
 Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:

Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave:

Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;

Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

TO A REPUBLICAN FRIEND, 1848

[1849.]

God knows it, I am with you. It to prize
Those virtues, priz'd and practis'd by too few,

But priz'd, but lov'd, but eminent in you,
Man's fundamental life: if to despise
The barren optimistic sophistries

Of comfortable moles, whom what they do
Teaches the limit of the just and true —

And for such doing have no need of eyes:
If sadness at the long heart-wasting show
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted:
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow

The armies of the homeless and unfed: —
If these are yours, if this is what you are,

Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

CONTINUED

Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud

Prospect of hope which France proclaims
so loud,

France, fam'd in all great arts, in none
supreme.

Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we
dream,

Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,

Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.
Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,

When, bursting through the network super-
pos'd

By selfish occupation — plot and plan,
Lust, avarice, envy — liberated man,

All difference with his fellow man com-
pos'd,

Shall be left standing face to face with
God.

TO FAUSTA

[1849.]

Joy comes and goes: hope ebbs and flows,
Like the wave.

Change doth unknit the tranquil strength
of men.

Love lends life a little grace,

A few sad smiles: and then,

Both are laid in one cold place,

In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly: friends smile and
die,

Like spring flowers.

Our vaunted life is one long funeral.

Men dig graves, with bitter tears,

For their dead hopes; and all,

Maz'd with doubts, and sick with
fears,

Count the hours.

We count the hours: these dreams of ours,
False and hollow,

Shall we go hence and find they are not
dead?

Joys we dimly apprehend

Faces that smil'd and fled,

Hopes born here, and born to end,

Shall we follow?

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

[1849.]

COME, dear children, let us away;

Down and away below.

Now my brothers call from the bay;

Now the great winds shorewards blow;

Now the salt tides seawards flow;

Now the wild white horses play,

Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.

Children dear, let us away.

This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.

Call once yet.

In a voice that she will know:

'Margaret! Margaret!'

Children's voices should be dear

(Call once more) to a mother's ear:

Children's voices, wild with pain.

Surely she will come again.

Call her once and come away.

This way, this way.

'Mother dear, we cannot stay.'

The wild white horses foam and fret.

Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down.

Call no more.

One last look at the white-wall'd town,

And the little grey church on the windy
shore.

Then come down.

She will not come though you call all day

Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday

We heard the sweet bells over the bay?

In the caverns where we lay,

Through the surf and through the swell,

The far-off sound of a silver bell?

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,

Where the winds are all asleep;

Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;

Where the salt weed sways in the stream;

Where the sea-beasts rang'd all round
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
 Where great whales come sailing by,
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
 Round the world for ever and ay?
 When did music come this way?
 Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
 (Call yet once) that she went away?
 Once she sate with you and me,
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the
 sea,

And the youngest sate on her knee.
 She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended
 it well,

When down swung the sound of the far-
 off bell.

She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear
 green sea.

She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
 In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
 'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
 And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here
 with thee.'

I said; 'Go up, dear heart, through the
 waves.

Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind
 sea-caves.'

She smil'd, she went up through the surf
 in the bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
 'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
 Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they
 say.

Come,' I said, and we rose through the surf
 in the bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down
 Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-
 wall'd town.

Through the narrow pav'd streets, where
 all was still,

To the little grey church on the windy hill.
 From the church came a murmur of folk
 at their prayers,

But we stood without in the cold blowing
 airs.

We climb'd on the graves, on the stones,
 worn with rains,

And we gaz'd up the aisle through the
 small leaded panes.

She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
 'Margaret, hie! come quick, we are here.

Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone.
 The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'

But, ah, she gave me never a look,
 For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.

'Loud prays the priest; shut stands the
 door.'

Come away, children, call no more.

Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.

Down to the depths of the sea.

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
 Singing most joyfully.

Hark, what she sings; 'O joy, O joy,
 For the humming street, and the child with
 its toy.

For the priest, and the bell, and the holy
 well.

For the wheel where I spun,
 And the blessed light of the sun.'

And so she sings her fill,
 Singing most joyfully,

Till the shuttle falls from her hand,

And the whizzing wheel stands still.

She steals to the window, and looks at the
 sand;

And over the sand at the sea;

And her eyes are set in a stare;

And anon there breaks a sigh,

And anon there drops a tear,

From a sorrow-clouded eye,

And a heart sorrow-laden,

A long, long sigh,

For the cold strange eyes of a little Mer-
 maiden,

And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.

Come children, come down.

The hoarse wind blows colder;

Lights shine in the town.

She will start from her slumber

When gusts shake the door;

She will hear the winds howling,

Will hear the waves roar.

We shall see, while above us

The waves roar and whirl,

A ceiling of amber,

A pavement of pearl.

Singing, 'Here came a mortal,

But faithless was she.

And alone dwell for ever

The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,

When soft the winds blow;

When clear falls the moonlight;

When spring-tides are low:

When sweet airs come seaward

From heaths star'd with broom;

And high rocks throw mildly

On the blanch'd sands a gloom:

Up the still, glistening beaches,

Up the creeks we will hie;

Over banks of bright seaweed

The ebb-tide leaves dry.

We will gaze, from the sand-hills,

At the white, sleeping town;

At the church on the hill-side—

And then come back down.

Singing, 'There dwells a lov'd one,

But cruel is she

She left lonely for ever

The kings of the sea.'

ISOLATION

[1852.]

Yes: in the sea of life enis'l'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.

The islands feel the enclosing flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing,
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
—For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?

A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

DESPONDENCY

[1852.]

THE thoughts that rain their steady glow
Like stars on life's cold sea,
Which others know, or say they know—
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,
But they will not remain.
They light me once, they hurry by,
And never come again.

SELF-DECEPTION

[1852.]

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory
Of possessing powers not our share?—
Since man woke on earth, he knows his
story,
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God:
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit;
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager Being
Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each gift
it saw.

Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing
Stav'd us back, and gave our choice the law,

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven
guided

Man's new spirit, since it was not we?

Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who de-
cided

What our gifts, and what our wants should
be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining
Shreds of gifts which he refus'd in full.
Still these waste us with their hopeless
straining—

Still the attempt to use them proves them
null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.

Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,
Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for
powers.

Ends we seek we never shall attain.

Ah, *some* power exists there, which is
ours?

Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

[1852. The version of 1857 is here reprinted.]

'In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises.—The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.—

'After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall, on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

'Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to follow him to Brittany, &c.—DUNLOP'S *History of Fiction*.

I

TRISTRAM

TRISTRAM

Is SHE not come? The messenger was
sure.

Prop me upon the pillows once again—

Raise me, my Page: this cannot long en-
dure,

Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips
the pane!
What lights will those out to the north-
ward be?

THE PAGE

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

TRISTRAM

Soft—who is that stands by the dying
fire?

THE PAGE

Iseult.

TRISTRAM

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

What Knight is this, so weak and pale,
Though the locks are yet brown on his
noble head,

Propt on pillows in his bed,
Gazing seawards for the light
Of some ship that fights the gale
On this wild December night?
Over the sick man's feet is spread
A dark green forest dress.
A gold harp leans against the bed,
Ruddy in the fire's light.

I know him by his harp of gold,
Famous in Arthur's court of old:
I know him by his forest dress.

The peerless hunter, harper, knight—
Tristram of Lyonesse.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?
The ringlets on her shoulders lying
In their flitting lustre vying
With the clasp of burnish'd gold
Which her heavy robe doth hold.
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight
As the driven snow are white:
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.

Is it that the bleak sea-gale
Beating from the Atlantic sea
On this coast of Brittany,
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower?

Is it that a deep fatigue
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,
Passing all her youthful hour
Spinning with her maidens here,
Listlessly through the window bars
Gazing seawards many a league
From her lonely shore-built tower,
While the knights are at the wars?
Or, perhaps, has her young heart
Felt already some deeper smart,
Of those that in secret the heart-strings
rive,

Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair?

Who is this snowdrop by the sea?
I know her by her mildness rare,
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;
I know her by her rich silk dress,

And her fragile loveliness.
The sweetest Christian soul alive,
Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany?—but where
Is that other Iseult fair,
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore
From Ireland to Cornwall bore,
To Tyntagel, to the side
Of King Marc, to be his bride?
She who, as they voyag'd, quaff'd
With Tristram that spic'd magic draught,
Which since then for ever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls,
Working love, but working teen?—

There were two Iseults, who did sway
Each her hour of Tristram's day;
But one possess'd his waning time,
The other his resplendent prime.
Behold her here, the patient Flower,
Who possess'd his darker hour.
Iseult of the Snow-White Hand

Watches pale by Tristram's bed.—
She is here who had his gloom,
Where art thou who hadst his bloom?
One such kiss as those of yore
Might thy dying knight restore—

Does the love-draught work no more?
Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
Iseult of Ireland?

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the
rain,
And the knight sinks back on his pillows
again.

He is weak with fever and pain,
And his spirit is not clear.
Hark! he mutters in his sleep,
As he wanders far from here,
Changes place and time of year,
And his closed eye doth sweep
O'er some fair unwint'ry sea,
Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
As he mutters brokenly—

TRISTRAM

The calm sea shines, loose hang the ves-
sel's sails—

Before us are the sweet green fields of
Wales,

And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—
*'Ah, would I were in those green fields at
play.*

*Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.
Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,
Reach me my golden cup that stands by
thee,*

And pledge me in it first for courtesy.—'
—Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd
like mine?

Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd
wine.—

Iseult! . . .

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!
 Keep his eyelids! let him seem
 Not this fever-wasted wight
 Thinn'd and pal'd before his time,
 But the brilliant youthful knight
 In the glory of his prime,
 Sitting in the gilded barge,
 At thy side, thou lovely charge!
 Bending gaily o'er thy hand,
 Iseult of Ireland!

And she too, that princess fair,
 If her bloom be now less rare,
 Let her have her youth again—

Let her be as she was then!
 Let her have her proud dark eyes,
 And her petulant quick replies,
 Let her sweep her dazzling hand
 With its gesture of command,
 And shake back her raven hair
 With the old imperious air.

As of old, so let her be,
 That first Iseult, princess bright,
 Chatting with her youthful knight
 As he steers her o'er the sea,
 Quitting at her father's will
 The green isle where she was bred,

And her bower in Ireland,
 For the surge-beat Cornish strand,
 Where the prince whom she must wed
 Dwells on proud Tyntagel's hill,
 Fast beside the sounding sea.
 And that golden cup her mother
 Gave her, that her future lord,
 Gave her, that King Marc and she,
 Might drink it on their marriage day,
 And for ever love each other,

Let her, as she sits on board,
 Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,
 See it shine, and take it up,
 And to Tristram laughing say—
 'Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,
 Pledge me in my golden cup!'

Let them drink it—let their hands
 Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,
 As they feel the fatal bands
 Of a love they dare not name,
 With a wild delicious pain,

Twine about their hearts again.
 Let the early summer be
 Once more round them, and the sea
 Blue, and o'er its mirror kind
 Let the breath of the May wind,
 Wandering through their drooping sails,
 Die on the green fields of Wales.
 Let a dream like this restore
 What his eye must see no more.

TRISTRAM

Chill blows the wind, the pleasance walks
 are drear.

Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me
 here?

Were feet like those made for so wild a
 way?

The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,
 Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day.
 'Tristram!—nay, nay—thou must not
 take my hand—

Tristram—sweet love—we are betray'd—
 out-plann'd.

Fly—save thyself—save me. I dare not
 stay!—

One last kiss first!—'Tis vain—to horse—
 —away!'

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move
 Faster surely than it should,
 From the fever in his blood.
 All the spring-time of his love
 Is already gone and past,
 And instead thereof is seen
 Its winter, which endureth still—
 Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,
 The pleasance walks, the weeping queen,
 The flying leaves, the straining blast,
 And that long, wild kiss—their last.
 And this rough December night
 And his burning fever pain
 Mingle with his hurrying dream
 Till they rule it, till he seem
 The press'd fugitive again,
 The love-desperate banish'd knight
 With a fire in his brain
 Flying o'er the stormy main.

Whither does he wander now?
 Haply in his dreams the wind
 Wafts him here, and lets him find
 The lovely Orphan Child again
 In her castle by the coast,
 The youngest, fairest châteline,
 That this realm of France can boast,

Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,
 Iseult of Brittany.

And—for through the haggard air,
 The stain'd arms, the matted hair
 Of that stranger knight ill-starr'd,
 There gleam'd something that recall'd
 The Tristram who in better days
 Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—
 Welcom'd here, and here install'd,
 Tended of his fever here,
 Haply he seems again to move
 His young guardian's heart with love;
 In his exile's loneliness,
 In his stately deep distress,
 Without a word, without a tear.—

Ah, 'tis well he should retrace
 His tranquil life in this lone place;
 His gentle bearing at the side
 Of his timid youthful bride;
 His long rambles by the shore
 On winter evenings, when the roar
 Of the near waves came, sadly grand,
 Through the dark, up the drown'd sand:

Or his endless reveries
 In the woods, where the gleams play
 On the grass under the trees,
 Passing the long summer's day
 Idle as a mossy stone
 In the forest depths alone;
 The chase neglected, and his hound
 Couch'd beside him on the ground.—
 Ah, what trouble 's on his brow?
 Hither let him wander now,
 Hither, to the quiet hours
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours
 By the grey Atlantic sea.
 Hours, if not of ecstasy,
 From violent anguish surely free.

TRISTRAM

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
 The wide plain rings, the daz'd air throbs
 with blows.
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—
 Their spears are down, their steeds are
 bath'd in foam.
 'Up, Tristram, up,' men cry, 'thou moon-
 struck knight!
 What foul fiend rides thee? On into the
 fight!'—
 Above the din her voice is in my ears—
 I see her form glide through the crossing
 spears.—
 Isult! . . .

Ah, he wanders forth again;
 We cannot keep him; now as then
 There 's a secret in his breast
 That will never let him rest.
 These musing fits in the green wood
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.
 His sword is sharp—his horse is good—
 Beyond the mountains will he see
 The famous towns of Italy,
 And label with the blessed sign
 The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.
 At Arthur's side he fights once more
 With the Roman Emperor.
 There 's many a gay knight where he goes
 Will help him to forget his care.
 The march—the leaguer—Heaven's blithe
 air—
 The neighing steeds—the ringing blows;
 Sick pining comes not where these are.
 Ah, what boots it, that the jest
 Lightens every other brow,
 What, that every other breast
 Dances as the trumpets blow,
 If one's own heart beats not light
 On the waves of the toss'd fight,
 If oneself cannot get free
 From the clog of misery?
 Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale
 Watching by the salt sea tide
 With her children at her side

For the gleam of thy white sail.
 Home, Tristram, to thy halls again!
 To our lonely sea complain,
 To our forests tell thy pain.

TRISTRAM

All round the forest sweeps off, black in
 shade,
 But it is moonlight in the open glade:
 And in the bottom of the glade shine
 clear
 The forest chapel and the fountain near.
 I think, I have a fever in my blood:
 Come, let me leave the shadow of this
 wood,
 Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the
 flood.
 Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's
 clear light.
 God! 'tis *her* face plays in the water's
 bright.—
 'Fair love,' she says, 'canst thou forget so
 soon,
 At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?'
 Isult! . . .

Ah poor soul, if this be so,
 Only death can balm thy woe.
 The solitudes of the green wood
 Had no medicine for thy mood.
 The rushing battle clear'd thy blood
 As little as did solitude.
 Ah, his eyelids slowly break
 Their hot seals, and let him wake.
 What new change shall we now see?
 A happier? Worse it cannot be.

TRISTRAM

Is my Page here? Come, turn me to the
 fire.
 Upon the window panes the moon shines
 bright;
 The wind is down: but she'll not come to-
 night.
 Ah no—she is asleep in Cornwall now,
 Far hence—her dreams are fair—smooth
 is her brow.
 Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.
 I have had dreams, I have had dreams,
 my Page,
 Would take a score years from a strong
 man's age,
 And with a blood like mine, will leave,
 I fear,
 Scant leisure for a second messenger.
 My Princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis
 too late.
 To bed, and sleep: my fever is gone by:
 To-night my Page shall keep me company.
 Where do the children sleep? kiss them
 for me.

Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I:
This comes of nursing long and watching
late.
To bed—good night!

She left the gleam-lit fire-place,
She came to the bed-side.
She took his hands in hers: her tears
Down on her slender fingers rain'd.
She rais'd her eyes upon his face—
Not with a look of wounded pride,
A look as if the heart complain'd:—
Her look was like a sad embrace;
The gaze of one who can divine
A grief, and sympathise.
Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes
Are not more innocent than thine.
But they sleep in sheltered rest,
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
On the Castle's southern side;
Where feebly comes the mournful roar
Of buffeting wind and surging tide
Through many a room and corridor.
Full on their window the Moon's ray
Makes their chamber as bright as day;
It shines upon the blank white walls,
And on the snowy pillow falls,
And on two angel-heads doth play
Turn'd to each other:—the eyes clos'd—
The lashes on the cheeks repos'd.
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set
Hardly lets peep the golden hair;
Through the soft-open'd lips the air
Scarcely moves the coverlet.
One little wandering arm is thrown
At random on the counterpane,
And often the fingers close in haste
As if their baby owner chas'd
The butterflies again.
This stir they have and this alone;
But else they are so still.
Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.
But were you at the window now
To look forth on the fairy sight
Of your illumin'd haunts by night;
To see the park-glades where you play
Far lovelier than they are by day:
To see the sparkle on the eaves,
And upon every giant bough
Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves
Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain—
How would your voices run again!
And far beyond the sparkling trees
Of the castle park one sees
The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,
Moor behind moor, far, far away,
Into the heart of Brittany.
And here and there, lock'd by the land,
Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,
And many a stretch of watery sand
All shining in the white moon-beams.
But you see fairer in your dreams.

What voices are these on the clear night
air?
What lights in the court? what steps on the
stair?

II

ISEULT OF IRELAND

TRISTRAM

RAISE the light, my Page, that I may see
her.—
Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen!
Long I've waited, long I've fought my
fever:
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

ISEULT

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:
I was bound, I could not break the band.
Chide not with the past, but feel the
present:
I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

TRISTRAM

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd
me;
Thou hast dar'd it: but too late to save.
Fear not now that men should tax thy
honour.
I am dying: build—(thou may'st)—my
grave!

ISEULT

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak
kindly!
What, I hear these bitter words from thee?
Sick with grief I am, and faint with
travel—
Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on
me!

TRISTRAM

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.
But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud
Isult!
And thy beauty never was more fair.

ISEULT

Ah, harsh flatterer! let alone my beauty.
I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
Take my hand, and touch these wasted
fingers—
See my cheek and lips, how white they are.

TRISTRAM

Thou art paler:—but thy sweet charm,
Isult!
Would not fade with the dull years away.
Ah, how fair thou standest in the moon-
light!
I forgive thee, Isult!—thou wilt stay?

ISEULT

Fear me not, I will be always with thee;
I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy
pain;
Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers
Join'd at evening of their days again.

TRISTRAM

No, thou shalt not speak; I should be finding
 Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.
 Sit—sit by me: I will think, we've lived so
 In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

ISEULT

Alter'd, Tristram? Not in courts, believe
 me,
 Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.
 Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.
 Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd.

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd
 husband—

That was bliss to make my sorrow flee!
 Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—

Those were friends to make me false to
 thee!

What, thou think'st, men speak in courtly
 chambers

Words by which the wretched are consol'd?
 What, thou think'st, this aching brow was
 cooler,

Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were bal-
 anc'd,

Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,
 Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest—
 Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

Vain and strange debate, where both have
 suffer'd;

Both have pass'd a youth constrain'd and
 sad;

Both have brought their anxious day to
 evening,

And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth: nor will thy
 people

Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,
 That a former rival shares her office,

When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,
 I, a statue on thy chapel floor,
 Pour'd in grief before the Virgin Mother,
 Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry—'Is this the foe I dreaded?
 This his idol? this that royal bride?

Ah, an hour of health would purge his
 eyesight:

Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side.'

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives
 me.

I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.
 Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight
 blinds them—

Nay, all's well again: thou must not weep.

TRISTRAM

I am happy: yet I feel, there's something
 Swells my heart, and takes my breath
 away:

Through a mist I see thee: near!—come
 nearer!

Bend—bend down—I yet have much to
 say.

ISEULT

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the
 pillow!—

Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail.
 Call on God and on the holy angels!

What, love, courage!—Christ! he is so
 pale.

TRISTRAM

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching.
 This is what my mother said should be,
 When the fierce pains took her in the
 forest,

The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

'Son,' she said, 'thy name shall be of sor-
 row!'

Tristram art thou call'd for my death's
 sake!

So she said, and died in the drear forest.
 Grief since then his home with me doth
 make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly!
 Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.
 But, since living we were ununited,
 Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult:
 Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.
 Say, I charg'd her, that ye live together:—
 She will grant it—she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death I leave thee;
 One last kiss upon the living shore!

ISEULT

Tristram!—Tristram!—stay—receive me
 with thee!

Iseult leaves thee, Tristram, never more.

You see them clear: the moon shines
 bright.

Slow—slow and softly, where she stood,
 She sinks upon the ground: her hood
 Had fallen back: her arms outspread
 Still hold her lover's hands: her head
 Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.
 O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair
 Lies in disorder'd streams; and there,
 Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,
 And the golden bracelets heavy and rare
 Flash on her white arms still.

The very same which yesternight
 Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,
 When the feast was gay and the laughter
 loud

In Tyntagel's palace proud.
But then they deck'd a restless ghost
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,
And quivering lips on which the tide
Of courtly speech abruptly died,
And a glance that over the crowded floor,
The dancers, and the festive host,
Flew ever to the door.

That the knights eyed her in surprise,
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly—
'Her moods, good lack, they pass like
showers!

But yesternight and she would be
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,
And now to-night she laughs and speaks
And has a colour in her cheeks.

Christ keep us from such fantasy!'

The air of the December night
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be.
Swinging with it, in the light
Shines the ghostlike tapestry.

And on the arras wrought you see
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,
And round him a fresh forest scene.
On that clear forest knoll he stays
With his pack round him, and delays.
He stares and stares, with troubled face,
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,
At the bright iron-figur'd door,
And those blown rushes on the floor.

He gazes down into the room
With heated cheeks and flurried air,
And to himself he seems to say—
'What place is this, and who are they?
*Who is that kneeling Lady fair?
And on his pillows that pale Knight
Who seems of marble on a tomb?
How comes it here, this chamber bright,
Through whose mullion'd windows clear
The castle court all wet with rain,
The drawbridge, and the moat appear,
And then the beach, and mark'd with spray
The sunken reefs, and far away
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain?*—

*What, has some glamour made me sleep,
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,
By night, with boisterous bugle peal,
Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,
Not in the free greenwood at all?
That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer
That Lady by the bed doth kneel:
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle peal!*—

The wild boar rustles in his lair—
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air—
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take!

For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here.
For these thou seest are unmov'd;
Cold, cold as those who liv'd and lov'd
A thousand years ago.

III

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away.
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult
lay;

In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old:
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.
The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
Had wander'd forth: her children were at
play

In a green circular hollow in the heath
Which borders the sea-shore; a country
path

Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclin'd,
And to one standing on them, far and near
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and
clear

Over the waste:—This cirque of open
ground

Is light and green; the heather, which all
round

Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the
pale grass

Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd
mass

Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here
and there

Dotted with holly trees and juniper.
In the smooth centre of the opening stood
Three hollies side by side, and made a
screen

Warm with the winter sun, of burnish'd
green,

With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's
food.

Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands
Watching her children play: their little
hands

Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and
streams

Of stagshorn for their hats: anon, with
screams

Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and
bound

Among the holly clumps and broken
ground,

Racing full speed, and startling in their
rush

The fell-fares and the speckled missel-
thrush

Out of their glossy coverts: but when now
Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each
hot brow

Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair
In blinding masses shower'd the golden
hair—

Then Iseult called them to her, and the three
 Cluster'd under the holly screen, and she
 Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three
 stood there,
 Under the hollies, in the clear still air —
 Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening
 Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt
 bring.

Long they stayed still — then, pacing at
 their ease,

Mov'd up and down under the glossy trees;
 But still as they pursued their warm dry
 road

From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
 And still the children listen'd, their blue
 eyes

Fix'd on their mother's face in wide sur-
 prise;

Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-
 side,

Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright
 and wide,

Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all
 away

From the open heath, still by the hedge-
 rows lay,

Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with
 screams

Bore up from where the bright Atlantic
 gleams,

Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite
 clear,

The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.
 And they would still have listen'd, till dark
 night

Came keen and chill down on the heather
 bright;

But, when the red glow on the sea grew
 cold,

And the grey turrets of the castle old
 Look'd sternly through the frosty evening
 air, —

Then Iseult took by the hand those chil-
 dren fair,

And brought her tale to an end, and found
 the path

And led them home over the darkening
 heath.

And is she happy? Does she see un-
 mov'd

The days in which she might have liv'd and
 lov'd

Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,
 One after one, to-morrow like to-day?

Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will:—
 Is it this thought that makes her mien so
 still,

Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though
 sweet,

So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet

Her children's? She moves slow: her voice
 alone

Has yet an infantine and silver tone,
 But even that comes languidly: in truth,
 She seems one dying in a mask of youth.

And now she will go home, and softly lay
 Her laughing children in their beds, and
 play

Awile with them before they sleep; and
 then

She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
 Dragging their nets through the rough
 waves, afar,

Along this iron coast, know like a star,
 And take her broidery frame, and there
 she'll sit

Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it,
 Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind

Her children, or to listen to the wind.
 And when the clock peals midnight, she
 will move

Her work away, and let her fingers rove
 Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's
 hound

Who lies, guarding her feet, along the
 ground:

Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes
 Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap;
 then rise,

And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have
 told

Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,
 Then to her soft sleep: and to-morrow'll
 be

To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.

The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
 Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,

Are there the sole companions to be found.
 But these she loves; and noisier life than
 this

She would find ill to bear, weak as she is:
 She has her children too, and night and
 day

Is with them; and the wide heaths where
 they play,

The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-
 shore,

The sand, the sea birds, and the distant
 sails,

These are to her dear as to them: the tales
 With which this day the children she be-
 guil'd

She glean'd from Breton grandames when
 a child

In every hut along this sea-coast wild.
 She herself loves them still, and, when they
 are told,

Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
 Not suffering, that shuts up eye and ear

To all which has delighted them before,
And lets us be what we were once no
more.

No: we may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be mov'd and sooth'd, for all our
pain,

By what of old pleas'd us, and will again.
No: 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
Until they crumble, or else grow like
steel—

Which kills in us the bloom, the youth,
the spring—

Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
But takes away the power—this can avail,
By drying up our joy in everything,
To make our former pleasures all seem
stale.

This, or some tyrannous single thought,
some fit

Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,
Till for its sake alone we live and move—
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love—
This too can change us wholly, and make
seem

All that we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently;
Being in truth but a diseas'd unrest

And an unnatural overheat at best.
How they are full of languor and distress
Not having it; which when they do pos-
sess

They straightway are burnt up with fume
and care,

And spend their lives in posting here and
there

Where this plague drives them; and have
little ease,

Are fretful with themselves, and hard to
please,

Like that bold Caesar, the fam'd Roman
wight,

Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight
Who made a name at younger years than
he:

Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,
Who carried the great war from Macedon
Into the Soudan's realm, and thunder'd on
To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

What tale did Iseult to the children
say,

Under the hollies, that bright winter's day?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edg'd by the lonely sea;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden
sunshine creeps,
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree
sleeps.

For here he came with the fay Vivian,
One April, when the warm days first be-
gan;

He was on foot, and that false fay, his
friend,

On her white palfrey: here he met his
end,

In these lone sylvan glades, that April
day.

This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought
clear

Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems the forest air
Had loosen'd the brown curls of Vivian's
hair,

Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and
her blue eyes

Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bath'd
in sweat,

For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd
yet.

A brier in that tangled wilderness
Had scor'd her white right hand, which she
allows

To rest unglov'd on her green riding-
dress;

The other ward off the drooping boughs.
But still she chatted on, with her blue
eyes

Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately
prize:

Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear
grace,

The spirit of the woods was in her face;
She look'd so witching fair, that learned
wight

Forgot his craft, and his best wits took
flight,

And he grew fond, and eager to obey
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood
ceas'd, and day

Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground
broke away

In a slop'd sward down to a brawling
brook,

And up as high as where they stood to
look

On the brook's further side was clear;
but then

The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with
thorns

Then white with blossom; and you saw the
horns,

Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-
deer

Which come at noon down to the water
here

You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart
 along
 Under the thorns on the green sward;
 and strong
 The blackbird whistled from the dingles
 near,
 And the light chipping of the woodpecker
 Rang loneliness and sharp: the sky was fair,
 And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd every-
 where.
 Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's
 brow
 To gaze on the green sea of leaf and
 bough
 Which glistening lay all round them, lone
 and mild,
 As if to itself the quiet forest smil'd.
 Upon the brow-top grew a thorn; and
 here
 The grass was dry and moss'd, and you
 saw clear
 Across the hollow: white anemones
 Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of prim-
 roses
 Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
 No fairer resting-place a man could find.
 'Here let us halt,' said Merlin then; and
 she
 Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a
 sleep
 Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
 Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
 And from her brown-lock'd head the wim-
 ple throws,
 And takes it in her hand, and waves it
 over
 The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping
 lover.
 Nine times she wav'd the fluttering wimple
 round,
 And made a little plot of magic ground.
 And in that daisied circle, as men say,
 Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,
 But she herself whither she will can rove,
 For she was passing weary of his love.

MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

[1852.]

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
 Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
 But one such death remain'd to come.
 The last poetic voice is dumb.
 What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's
 tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
 We bow'd our head and held our breath.
 He taught us little: but our soul
 Had felt him like the thunder's roll.

With shivering heart the strife we saw
 Of Passion with Eternal Law.
 And yet with reverential awe
 We watch'd the fount of fiery life
 Which serv'd for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said—
 Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
 Physician of the Iron Age
 Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
 He took the suffering human race,
 He read each wound, each weakness clear—
 And struck his finger on the place
 And said—Thou ailest here, and here.—
 He look'd on Europe's dying hour
 Of fitful dream and feverish power;
 His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,
 The turmoil of expiring life;
 He said—The end is everywhere:
 Art still has truth, take refuge there.—
 And he was happy, if to know
 Causes of things, and far below
 His feet to see the lurid flow
 Of terror, and insane distress,
 And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts! re-
 joice!

For never has such soothing voice
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
 Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
 Wordsworth is gone from us—and ye,
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.
 He too upon a wintry clime
 Had fallen—on this iron time
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
 He found us when the age had bound
 Our souls in its benumbing round:
 He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.
 He laid us as we lay at birth
 On the cool flowery lap of earth;
 Smiles broke from us and we had ease.
 The hills were round us, and the breeze
 Went o'er the sun-lit fields again:
 Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
 Our youth return'd: for there was shed
 On spirits that had long been dead,
 Spirits dried up and closely-furl'd,
 The freshness of the early world.

Ah, since dark days still bring to light
 Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
 Time may restore us in his course
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force:
 But where will Europe's latter hour
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
 Others will teach us how to dare,
 And against fear our breast to steel;
 Others will strengthen us to bear—
 But who, ah who, will make us feel?
 The cloud of mortal destiny,
 Others will front it fearlessly—

But who, like him, will put it by?
Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha! with thy living wave.
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

SELF-DEPENDENCE

[1852.]

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears
me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
'Ye who from my childhood up have
calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'Ye Stars, ye
Waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew:
Still, still, let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you.'

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of
heaven,
Over the lit sea's long moon-silver'd roll,
In the rustling night-air came the answer—
'Wouldst thou be as these are? Live as
they.

'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without
them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

'And with joy the stars perform their
shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.
For alone they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

'Bounded by themselves, and unobservant
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.'

O air-born Voice! long since, severely
clear,

A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.
'Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he
Who finds himself, loses his misery.'

A SUMMER NIGHT

[1852.]

In the deserted moon-blanch'd street
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,

Repellent as the world:—but see!
A break between the house-tops shows
The moon, and, lost behind her, fading
dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity
Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought
Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moon-lit
deep

As clearly as at noon;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heav'd dazzlingly between;
Houses with long white sweep
Girdled the glistening bay:
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread
away.

That night was far more fair;
But the same restless paces to and fro
And the same vainly throbbing heart was
there,
And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say—
*Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast
That neither deadens into rest
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whisks the spirit from itself away.
But fluctuates to and fro
Never by passion quite possess'd,
And never quite benumb'd by the world's
sway?*

And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield, and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they lan-
guidly

Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork
give.

Dreaming of nought beyond their prison
wall.

And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their
breast.

And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which
they are prest,
Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison, and depart
On the wide Ocean of Life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his
heart

sums up a philosophy.

Listeth, will sail;
Nor does he know how there prevail,
Despotic on life's sea,
Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.
Awwhile he holds some false sway, un-
debarr'd

By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves.
And then the tempest strikes him, and
between

The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale Master on his spar-strewn
deck

With anguish'd face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not
where,

Still standing for some false impossible
shore.

And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepen-
ing gloom

Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman
loom,

And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow
of stain,
Clearness divine!

Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions have
no sign

Of languor, though so calm, and though so
great

Are yet untroubled and unpassionate:
Who, though so noble, share in the world's
toil,

And though so task'd, keep free from dust
and soil:

I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd
in vain;

But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons
be,

How vast, yet of what clear transparency.
How it were good to sink there, and
breathe free.

How high a lot to fill
Is left to each man still.

THE BURIED LIFE

[1852.]

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words,
and yet,

Behold, with tears my eyes are wet.
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,

We know, we know that we can smile;
But there's a something in this breast
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love, thy inmost
soul.

Alas, is even Love too weak
To unlock the heart and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame re-
prov'd:

I knew they liv'd and mov'd
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human
breast.

But we, my love—does a like spell benumb
Our hearts—our voices?—must we too
be dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd:
For that which seals them hath been deep
ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be,
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity;
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite, his being's law,
Bade, through the deep recesses of our
breast

The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often in the world's most crowded
streets,

But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life,
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to enquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us, to know
Whence our thoughts come and where they
go.

And many a man in his own breast then
delves,

But deep enough, alas, none ever mines :
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown on each talent and
power,

But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been our-
selves ;

Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through
our breast,

But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true:

And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power ;

Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call :
Yet still, from time to time, vague and
forlorn,

From the soul's subterranean depth up-
borne

As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—

When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear

Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd,
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our
breast

And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies
plain,

And what we mean, we say, and what we
would, we know.

A man becomes aware of his life's flow
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the
breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The Hills where his life rose,
And the Sea where it goes.

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF 'OBERMANN'

[1852.]

In front the awful Alpine track
Crawls up its rocky stair ;
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandoned baths
Mute in their meadows lone ;
The leaves are on the valley paths ;
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea.

I hear the torrents roar.

—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee!

I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves : I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll ;
That air of languor, cold, and death,
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,
Condemn'd to cast about,
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
For comfort from without :

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign ;
A wounded human spirit turns
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air
Fresh through these pages blows,
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows,

Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That, Obermann! the world around
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways.
To tell too deep ones is not well ;
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd
In this our troubled day,
I know but two, who have attain'd,
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,
His quiet home one keeps ;
And one, the strong much-toiling Sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate ;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eye on nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear;
Clearer, how much! than ours: yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of a tremendous time,
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd, to attain
Wordsworth sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder sage!
To thee: we feel thy spell.
The hopeless tangle of our age—
Thou too hast scan'd it well.

Immovable thou sittest; still
As death; compos'd to bear.
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,
One hears thee saying now—
'Greater by far than thou are dead:
Strive not: die also thou.'—

Ah! Two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.

'The glow,' he cries, 'the thrill of life—
Where, where do these abound?'
Not in the world, not in the strife
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shar'd, the
strife,
Knows how the day hath gone;
He only lives with the world's life
Who hath renounc'd his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd
Where thou, O Seer, art set;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—
The world is colder yet!

And thou hast pleasures too to share
With those who come to thee:
Balms floating on thy mountain air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet door, and seen
The summer day grow late,

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starr'd,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Leman's waters, far below:
And watch'd the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snow:
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play:
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young;
Listen'd, and wept—Away!

Away the dreams that but deceive!
And thou, sad Guide, adieu!
I go; Fate drives me: but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line:
Can neither, when we will, enjoy;
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live:—but thou,
Thou melancholy Shade!
Wilt not, if thou can'st see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,
The Children of the Second Birth
Whom the world could not tame;

And with that small transfigur'd Band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pin'd unseen,
Who was on action hurl'd,
Whose one bond is that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
Unsoil'd:—and so, Farewell!

Farewell! — Whether thou now liest near
That much-lov'd inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls
Issuing on that green place
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date
Ere he plods on again; —
Or whether, by maligner Fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The blue Seine rolls her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
Thy hardly-heard-of grave —

Farewell! Under the sky we part,
In this stern Alpine dell.
O unstrung will! O broken heart!
A last, a last farewell!

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

[1852.]

RAIS'D are the dripping oars —
Silent the boat: the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for ay.
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely: a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
For he lent a new life to these hills.
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
That border Ennerdale Lake,
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
The gleam of The Evening Star
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
But ruin'd and solemn and grey
The sheepfold of Michael survives,
And far to the south, the heath
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
By the favourite waters of Ruth.
These survive: yet not without pain,
Pain and dejection to-night,
Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
He look'd on the rushing decay
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth.
Felt the dissolving throes
Of a social order he lov'd.

Outliv'd his brethren, his peers.
And, like the Theban seer,
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa.
Copais lay bright in the moon;
Helicon glass'd in the lake
Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks
Of Parnassus, snowily clear:
Thebes was behind him in flames,
And the clang of arms in his ear,
When his awe-struck captors led
The Theban seer to the spring.

Tiresias drank and died.
Nor did reviving Thebes
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head
Of a sacred poet lies low
In an age which can rear them no more.
The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were
glad.

He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
Of his race is past on the earth;
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the Poet who sings you so well?
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,
Or the voice which reveals what you are?
Are ye, like daylight and sun,
Shar'd and rejoic'd in by all?
Or are ye immers'd in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world
Too deep for the most to discern?
Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage,
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

'They are here' — I heard, as men heard
In Mysian Ida the voice
Of the Mighty Mother, or 'Crete,
The murmur of Nature reply —
'Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,
They are here — they are set in the world —
They abide — and the finest of souls
Has not been thrill'd by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal, and live,
For they are the life of the world.
Will ye not learn it, and know,
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,
That the singer was less than his themes,
Life, and Emotion, and I?

'More than the singer are these.
Weak is the tremor of pain

That thrills in his mournfullest chord
 To that which once ran through his soul.
 Cold the elation of joy
 In his gladdest, airiest song,
 To that which of old in his youth
 Fill'd him and made him divine.
 Hardly his voice at its best
 Gives us a sense of the awe,
 The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
 Of the unlit gulf of himself.

'Ye know not yourselves — and your bards,
 The clearest, the best, who have read
 Most in themselves, have beheld
 Less than they left unreveal'd.
 Ye express not yourselves — can ye make
 With marble, which colour, with word,
 What charm'd you in others re-live?
 Can thy pencil, O Artist, restore
 The figure, the bloom of thy love,
 As she was in her morning of spring?
 Canst thou paint the ineffable smile
 Of her eyes as they rested on thine?
 Can the image of life have the glow,
 The motion of life itself?

'Yourselves and your fellows ye know not
 — and me

The mateless, the one, will ye know?
 Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
 Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
 My longing, my sadness, my joy?
 Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
 To have render'd the gleam of my skies,
 To have echoed the moan of my seas,
 Utter'd the voice of my hills?
 When your great ones depart, will ye say —
 "All things have suffer'd a loss —
 Nature is hid in their grave?"

'Race after race, man after man,
 Have dream'd that my secret was theirs,
 Have thought that I liv'd but for them,
 That they were my glory and joy. —
 They are dust, they are chang'd, they are
 gone.

I remain.'

MORALITY

[1852.]

We cannot kindle when we will
 The fire that in the heart resides,
 The spirit bloweth and 'is still,
 In mystery our soul abides:
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
 We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
 We bear the burden and the heat
 Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
 Not till the hours of light return
 All we have built do we discern,

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
 When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
 Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
 Thy struggling task'd morality.
 Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
 Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
 Whose eyes thou wert afraid to seek,
 See, on her face a glow is spread,
 A strong emotion on her cheek.
 'Ah child,' she cries, 'that strife divine —
 Whence was it, for it is not mine?

'There is no effort on *my* brow —
 I do not strive, I do not weep.
 I rush with the swift spheres, and glow
 In joy, and, when I will, I sleep. —
 Yet that severe, that earnest air,
 I saw, I felt it once — but where?

'I knew not yet the gauge of Time,
 Nor wore the manacles of Space.
 I felt it in some other clime —
 I saw it in some other place.
 — 'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
 And lay upon the breast of God.'

THE FUTURE

[1852.]

A WANDERER is man from his birth.
 He was born in a ship
 On the breast of the River of Time.
 Brimming with wonder and joy
 He spreads out his arms to the light,
 Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts
 been.

Whether he wakes
 Where the snowy mountainous pass
 Echoing the screams of the eagles
 Hems in its gorges the bed
 Of the new-born clear-flowing stream:

Whether he first sees light
 Where the river in gleaming rings
 Sluggishly winds through the plain:
 Whether in sound of the swallowing sea: —
 As is the world on the banks
 So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each as he glides
 Fable and dream
 Of the lands which the River of Time
 Had left ere he woke on its breast,
 Or shall reach when his eyes have been
 clos'd.

Only the tract where he sails
 He wots of: only the thoughts,
 Rais'd by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green Earth any more
 As she was by the sources of Time?

Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?
Who thinks as they thought,
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,
Her vigorous primitive sons?

What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What Bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the River of Time
Now flows through with us, is the Plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confus'd as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which we
see.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the River of Time.
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the River of Time,
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider statelier stream—
May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the grey expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with
foam
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:
As the pale waste widens around him—

As the banks fade dimmer away—
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

[1853.]

"The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. . . . To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days."

—SIR JOHN MALCOLM'S *History of Persia*

deliberate attempt to let us know it is
AND the first grey of morning fill'd the
east,

And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plung'd
in sleep:

Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his
sword,

And took his horseman's cloak, and left
the tent,

And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's
tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd,
which stood

*a morning stillness under
Persian horsemen's language to
Sohrab
by him*

Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat
 strand
 Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
 When the sun melts the snows in high
 Pamere:
 Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er
 that low strand,
 And to a hillock came, a little back
 From the stream's brink, the spot where
 first a boat,
 Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the
 land.
 The men of former times had crown'd the
 top
 With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and
 now
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were
 spread.
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and
 stood
 Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,
 And found the old man sleeping on his
 bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his
 arms.
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the
 step
 Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's
 sleep:
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:
 'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear
 dawn.
 Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?'
 But Sohrab came to the bedside, and
 said:—
 'Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
 Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
 In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
 Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan
 first
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
 I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
 This too thou know'st, that, while I still
 bear on
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the
 world,
 And beat the Persians back on every field,
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
 Rustum, my father; who, I hop'd, should
 greet,
 Should one day greet, upon some well-
 fought field
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
 So I long hop'd, but him I never find.
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what
 I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian
 lords
 To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
 Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no
 kin.
 Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
 Where host meets host, and many names
 are sunk:
 But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.'
 He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and
 said:—
 'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar
 chiefs,
 And share the battle's common chance with
 us
 Who love thee, but must press for ever
 first,
 In single fight incurring single risk,
 To find a father thou hast never seen?
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us
 Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
 And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's
 towns.
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through
 fight:
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
 For now it is not as when I was young,
 When Rustum was in front of every fray:
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
 Whether that his own mighty strength at
 last
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
 Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
 There go:—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart
 forebodes
 Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
 Fain would I know thee safe and well,
 though lost
 To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in
 peace
 To seek thy father, not seek single fights
 In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
 From ravening? and who govern Rustum's
 son?
 Go: I will grant thee what thy heart de-
 sires.'
 So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand,
 and left
 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he
 lay,
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
 And threw a white cloak round him, and
 he took
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;

And on his head he placed his sheep-skin
cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-
Kul;

And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd
the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering
sands:

And from their tents the Tartar horsemen
fil'd

Into the open plain; so Haman bade;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse,
they stream'd:

As when, some grey November morn, the
files,

In marching order spread, of long-neck'd
cranes

Stream over Casbin, and the southern
slopes

Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, south-
ward bound

For the warm Persian sea-board: so they
stream'd.

The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First with black sheep-skin caps and with
long spears;

Large men, large steeds; who from Bok-
hara come

And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of
the south,

The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian
sands;

Light men, and on light steeds, who only
drink

The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse,
who came

From far, and a more doubtful service
own'd;

The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder
hordes

Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern
waste

Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes
who stray

Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirg-
hizzes,

Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians form'd:
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they
seem'd,

The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,

Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd
steel.

But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the
front,

And with his staff kept back the foremost
ranks.

And when Ferood, who led the Persians,
saw

That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he
came,

And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them
where they stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and
said:—

'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars,
hear!

Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian
lords

To fight our champion Sohrab, man to
man.'

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for
joy—

So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa
said,

A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons
ran

Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they
lov'd.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighboring mountain of
milk snow;

Winding so high, that, as they mount, they
pass

Long flocks of travelling birds dead on
the snow,

Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they
themselves

Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd
mulberries—

In single file they move, and stop their
breath,

For fear they should dislodge the o'er-
hanging snows—

So the pale Persians held their breath with
fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came
up

To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King:
These came and counsell'd; and then
Gudurz said:

'Ferood, shame bids us take their chal-
lenge up,

Yet champion have we none to match this
youth.

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'
 So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and said:—
 'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'
 He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
 Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood beside him, charg'd with food;
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
 And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand;
 And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—
 'Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.'
 But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—
 'Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day: to-day has other needs.
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords

To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
 And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,
 Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.'
 He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—
 'Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I am older: if the young are weak, the King Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,
 And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
 For would that I myself had such a son,
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
 A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
 And he has none to guard his weak old age.
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more.'
 He spoke, and smil'd; and Gudurz made reply:—
 'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
 Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,
 Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
 And shuns to peril it with younger men.'
 And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply:—

'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
 But thou for men of nought would do great deeds?
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
 In single fight with any mortal man.'
 He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And from the fluted spine atop, a plume
 Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.
 So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
 Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,

By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.
 And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
 His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw
 Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.
 As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
 The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
 All the most valiant chiefs: long he perus'd
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
 Like some young cypress, tall and dark, and straight,
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
 'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
 Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,

And tried; and I have stood on many a
 field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a
 foe:
 Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on
 death?
 Be govern'd: quit the Tartar host, and
 come
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,
 And fight beneath my banner till I die.
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'
 So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his
 voice,
 The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Has builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers; and he saw that
 head,
 Streak'd with his first grey hairs: hope
 fill'd his soul;
 And he ran forwards and embrac'd his
 knees,
 And clasp'd his hand within his own and
 said:—
 'Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own
 soul!
 Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou
 not he?'
 But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling
 youth,
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own
 soul:—
 'Ah me, I muse what this young fox
 may mean.
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar
 boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,
 And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
 But he will find some pretext not to fight.
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous
 gifts,
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
 And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
 "I challeng'd once, when the two armies
 camp'd
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
 To cope with me in single fight; but they
 Shrank; only Rustum dar'd: then he and I
 Chang'd gifts, and went on equal terms
 away."
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men ap-
 plaud.
 Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd
 through me.'
 And then he turn'd, and sternly spake
 aloud:—
 'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question
 thus
 Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast
 call'd

By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt,
 or yield.
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and
 flee.
 For well I know, that did great Rustum
 stand
 Before thy face this day, and were re-
 veal'd,
 There would be then no talk of fighting
 more.
 But being what I am, I tell thee this;
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and
 yield;
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand,
 till winds
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer
 floods,
 Oxus in summer wash them all away.'
 He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his
 feet:—
 'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright
 me so.
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum
 stand
 Here on this field, there were no fighting
 then.
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand
 here.
 Begin: thou art more vast, more dread
 than I,
 And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am
 young—
 But yet Success sways with the breath
 of Heaven.
 And though thou thinkest that thou know-
 est sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely
 know.
 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
 Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to
 fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of
 death,
 We know not, and no search will make us
 know:
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.'
 He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but
 hur'd
 His spear: down from the shoulder, down
 it came,
 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
 Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come.
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the
 spear
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into
 the sand,

Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab
 threw
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield:
 sharp rang,
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the
 spear.
 And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none
 but he
 Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and
 huge,
 Still rough; like those which men in treeless
 plains
 To build them boats fish from the flooded
 rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-
 time
 Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs;
 so huge
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and
 struck
 One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club
 came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rus-
 tum's hand.
 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and
 fell
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd
 the sand:
 And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd
 his sword,
 And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he
 lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with
 sand:
 But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his
 sword,
 But courteously drew back, and spoke,
 and said:—
 'Thou strik'st too hard: that club of
 thine will float
 Upon the summer floods, and not my
 bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth
 am I:
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my
 soul.
 Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum: be it so.
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my
 soul?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
 Have waded foremost in their bloody
 waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
 But never was my heart thus touch'd be-
 fore.
 Are they from Heaven, these softening of
 the heart?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry
 spears,

And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
 And pledge each other in red wine, like
 friends,
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's
 deeds.
 There are enough foes in the Persian host
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no
 pang;
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom
 thou
 Mayst fight; fight them, when they con-
 front thy spear.
 But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and
 me!
 He ceas'd: but while he spake, Rustum
 had risen,
 And stood erect, trembling with rage: his
 club
 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-
 hand
 Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn
 Star,
 The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering
 arms.
 His breast heav'd; his lips foam'd; and
 twice his voice
 Was chok'd with rage: at last these words
 broke way:—
 'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with
 thy hands!
 Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet
 words!
 Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no
 more!
 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art
 wont to dance;
 But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
 Of battle, and with me, who make no
 play
 Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.
 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and
 wine!
 Remember all thy valour: try thy feints
 And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:
 Because thou hast sham'd me before both
 the hosts
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy
 girl's wiles.'
 He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his
 taunts,
 And he too drew his sword: at once they
 rush'd
 Together, as two eagles on one prey
 Come rushing down together from the
 clouds,
 One from the east, one from the west:
 their shields
 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
 Rose, such as that the sinewy wood-
 cutters

Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
 And you would say that sun and stars took
 part
 In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
 Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the
 sun
 Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the
 plain,
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
 In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and
 they alone;
 For both the on-looking hosts on either
 hand
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was
 pure,
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
 But in the gloom they fought, with blood-
 shot eyes
 And labouring breath; first Rustum struck
 the shield
 Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-
 spik'd spear
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach
 the skin,
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry
 groan.
 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rus-
 tum's helm,
 Nor clove its steel quite through; but all
 the crest
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair
 plume,
 Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust;
 And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the
 gloom
 Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh,
 the horse,
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
 Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
 And comes at night to die upon the sand:—
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd
 for fear,
 And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but
 rush'd on,
 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
 His head; but this time all the blade, like
 glass,
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
 And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.
 Then Rustum rais'd his head: his dreadful
 eyes
 Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing
 spear,
 And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that
 shout,

And shrank amaz'd: back he recoil'd one
 step,
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advanc-
 ing Form:
 And then he stood bewilder'd; and he
 dropp'd
 His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd
 his side.
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the
 ground.
 And then the gloom dispers'd, and the
 wind fell,
 And the bright sun broke forth, and
 melted all
 The cloud; and the two armies saw the
 pair;
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.
 Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum be-
 gan:—
 'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to
 kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his
 corpse,
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
 Or else that the great Rustum would come
 down
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would
 move
 His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
 And then that all the Tartar host would
 praise
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy
 fame,
 To glad thy father in his weak old age.
 Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown
 man!
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'
 And with a fearless mien Sohrab re-
 plied:—
 'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is
 vain.
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful
 man!
 No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
 For were I match'd with ten such men as
 thou,
 And I were he who till to-day I was,
 They should be lying here, I standing there.
 But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—
 That name, and something, I confess, in
 thee,
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my
 shield
 Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd
 foe.
 And now thou boastest, and insult'st my
 fate.
 But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to
 hear!
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!

My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!

As when some hunter in the spring hath found

A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell

Far off; — anon her mate comes winging back

From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks

His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by: —

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss —

So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood

Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said: —

'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.'

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied: —

'Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,

Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;

And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap

To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!

Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King, her father, who grows grey

With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.

Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.

But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn

That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;

But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.'

He spoke; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,

Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.

Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;

For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear

Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms;

And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;

Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought;

And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon: tears gathered in his eyes;

For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture: as, at dawn,
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries

A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds; — so Rustum saw

His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;

And that old King, her father, who lov'd well

His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child

With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time —

The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills

In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe

Of an unskillful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass; — so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.

And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said: —

'O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.
 For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
 But one—a girl: who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams
 of us—
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor
 war.
 But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for
 now
 The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew
 fierce,
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
 But first he would convince his stubborn
 foe—
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—
 'Man, who art thou who dost deny my
 words?
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
 And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from
 mine.
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
 That seal which Rustum to my mother
 gave,
 That she might prick it on the babe 'she
 bore.'
 He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's
 cheeks;
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his
 hand,
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
 That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
 And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—
 'Sohrab, that were a proof which could
 not lie.
 If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's
 son.'
 Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab
 loos'd
 His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his
 arm,
 And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points
 Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
 Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain
 vase,
 An emperor's gift—at early morn he
 paints,
 And all day long, and, when night comes,
 the lamp
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin
 hands:—
 So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's
 seal.
 It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd
 Zal,
 Rustum's great father, whom they left to
 die,
 A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.

Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd,
 and lov'd—
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
 And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful
 eyes,
 And then he touch'd it with his hand and
 said:—
 'How say'st thou? Is that sign the
 proper sign
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'
 He spoke: but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd,
 and stood
 Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp
 cry—
 O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice choked
 there.
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his
 eyes,
 And his head swam, and he sunk down
 to earth.
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and
 cast
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
 And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his
 cheeks,
 Trying to call him back to life: and life
 Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his
 eyes
 And they stood wide with horror; and he
 seiz'd
 In both his hands the dust which lay
 around,
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd
 his hair,
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glitter-
 ing arms:
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his
 breast,
 And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd
 his sword,
 To draw it, and for ever let life out.
 But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his
 hands,
 And with a soothing voice he spoke, and
 said:—
 'Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
 The doom that at my birth was written
 down
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's uncon-
 scious hand.
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
 When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke
 too,
 I know it: but Fate trod those promptings
 down
 Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engag'd
 The strife and hurl'd me on my father's
 spear.
 But let us speak no more of this: I find
 My father; let me feel that I have found.
 Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take

My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
 And wash them with thy tears, and say,
 "My Son!"
 Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands
 of life,
 And swift; for like the lightning to this
 field
 I came, and like the wind I go away —
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
 But it was writ in Heaven that this should
 be.'
 So said he: and his voice releas'd the
 heart
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he
 cast
 His arms round his son's neck, and wept
 aloud,
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both
 the hosts
 When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh,
 the horse,
 With his head bowing to the ground, and
 mane
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and mute
 woe
 First to the one then to the other mov'd
 His head, as if enquiring what their grief
 Might mean; and from his dark, compas-
 sionate eyes,
 The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd
 the sand.
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and
 said: —
 'Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh,
 thy feet
 Should then have rotted on their nimble
 joints,
 When first they bore thy Master to this
 field.'
 But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and
 said: —
 'Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past
 days,
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave
 Steed!
 My terrible father's terrible horse; and
 said,
 That I should one day find thy lord and
 thee.
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the
 Lake
 Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee
 food,
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
 And said — "O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!"
 — but I

Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd
 face,
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund
 stream:
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only
 drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their
 sheep,
 The northern Sir; and this great Oxus
 stream —
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'
 And, with a heavy groan, Rustum re-
 plied: —
 'Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
 'Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!'
 And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab
 replied: —
 'Desire not that, my father; thou must
 live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and
 live,
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come: thou seest this great host of
 men
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not
 these;
 Let me entreat for them: what have they
 done?
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my
 star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send
 with them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy
 friends.
 And thou must lay me in that lovely
 earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
 That so the passing horseman on the waste
 May see my tomb a great way off, and
 say —
*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies
 there,
 Whom his great father did in ignorance
 kill* —
 And I be not forgotten in my grave.'
 And, with a mournful voice, Rustum
 replied: —
 'Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my
 son,
 So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,

And quit the host, and bear thee hence
with me,

And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for
thee,

With the snow-headed Zal, and all my
friends.

And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:

And men shall not forget thee in thy
grave.

And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?

For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest
foes,

And they who were call'd champions in
their time,

And through whose death I won that fame
I have;

And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown;
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my
Son!

Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of
thine,

Not thou of mine; and I might die, not
thou;

And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not
thine;

And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine
end.*—

But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age;
And I shall never end this life of blood.

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab re-
plied:—

'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not
now;

Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that
day,

When thou shalt sail in a high-masted
Ship,

Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.'

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face,
and said:—

'Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that
sea!

Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.'
He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him,
and took

The spear, and drew it from his side, and
eas'd

His wound's imperious anguish: but the
blood

Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold
white side

The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and
soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses
call

From the hot fields at noon: his head
droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack; motionless, white,
he lay—

White, with eyes clos'd; only when heavy
gasps,

Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all
his frame,

Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd
them,

And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from
his limbs

Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,

And youth and bloom, and this delightful
world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's
cloak

Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead
son.

As those black granite pillars, once high-
rear'd

By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights
of steps,

Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain
side—

So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
And night came down over the solemn
waste,

And the two gazing hosts, and that sole
pair,

And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with
night,

Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires

Began to twinkle through the fog: for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their
meal:

The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward; the Tartars by the river
marge:

And Rustum and his son were left alone.
But the majestic River floated on,

Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,

Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman
waste,

Under the solitary moon: he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,

*Begin 2 into in a
could for by the Orestes.*

Brimming, and bright, and large: then
sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his
streams,
And split his currents; that for many a
league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains
along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy
isles —
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard,
and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-
bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

PHILOMELA

[1853.]

HARK! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a
burst!
What triumph! hark—what pain!

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-
world pain—

Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?
Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this Eng-
lish grass,

The unfriendly palace in the Thracian
wild?

Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's
shame?

Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make
resound

With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—

How thick the bursts come crowding
through the leaves!

Again—thou hearest!

Eternal Passion!

Eternal Pain!

REQUIESCAT

[1853.]

STREW on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew.
In quiet she reposes:
Ah! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required:
She bath'd it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

[1853.]

'There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtility of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.'—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

Go, FOR they call you, Shepherd, from the
hill;

Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled
cotes:

No longer leave thy wistful flock un-
fed,

Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their
throats,

Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another
head.

But when the fields are still,

And the tired men and dogs all gone to
rest,

And only the white sheep are sometimes
seen

Cross and recross the strips of moon-
blanch'd green,

Come, Shepherd, and again renew the
quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
 In this high field's dark corner, where
 he leaves
 His coat, his basket, and his earthen
 cruse,
 And in the sun all morning binds the
 sheaves,
 Then here, at noon, comes back his
 stores to use;
 Here will I sit and wait,
 While to my ear from uplands far away
 The bleating of the folded flocks is
 borne,
 With distant cries of reapers in the
 corn—
 All the live murmur of a summer's day.
 Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-
 reap'd field,
 And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will
 I be.
 Through the thick corn the scarlet
 poppies peep
 And round green roots' and yellowing
 stalks I see
 Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:
 And air-swept lindens yield
 Their scent, and rustle down their per-
 fum'd showers
 Of bloom on the bent grass where I
 am laid,
 And bower me from the August sun
 with shade;
 And the eye travels down to Oxford's
 towers:
 And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's
 book—
 Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,
 The story of that Oxford scholar poor
 Of pregnant parts and quick inventive
 brain,
 Who, tir'd of knocking at Preferment's
 door,
 One summer morn forsook
 His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy
 lore,
 And roam'd the world with that wild
 brotherhood,
 And came, as most men deem'd, to
 little good,
 But came to Oxford and his friends no
 more.
 But once, years after, in the country lanes,
 Two scholars whom at college erst he
 knew
 Met him, and of his way of life en-
 quir'd.
 Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy
 crew,
 His mates, had arts to rule as they
 desir'd
 The workings of men's brains;

And they can bind them to what thoughts
 they will:
 'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
 When fully learn'd, will to the world
 impart:
 But it needs heaven-sent moments for
 this skill.'
 This said, he left them, and return'd no
 more,
 But rumours hung about the country
 side
 That the lost Scholar long was seen
 to stray,
 Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and
 tongue-tied,
 In hat of antique shape, and cloak of
 grey,
 The same the Gipsies wore.
 Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in
 spring:
 At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire
 moors,
 'On the warm ingle bench, the smock-
 frock'd boors
 Had found him seated at their entering,
 But, mid their drink and clatter, he would
 fly:
 And I myself seem half to know thy
 looks,
 And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on
 thy trace;
 And boys who in lone wheatfields scare
 the rooks
 I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet
 place;
 Or in my boat I lie
 Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer
 heats,
 Mid wide grass meadows which the
 sunshine fills,
 And watch the warm green-muffled
 Cumner hills,
 And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy
 retreats.
 For most, I know, thou lov'st retired
 ground.
 Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
 Returning home on summer nights,
 have met
 Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-
 lock-hithe,
 Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers
 wet,
 As the slow punt swings round:
 And leaning backwards in a pensive
 dream,
 And fostering in thy lap a heap of
 flowers
 Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wych-
 wood bowers,
 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit
 stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen
no more.

Maidens who from the distant hamlets
come

To dance around the Fyfield elm in
May,

Oft through the darkening fields have
seen thee roam,

Or cross a stile into the public way.

Oft thou hast given them store

Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anem-
one—

Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of
summer eves—

And purple orchises with spotted
leaves—

But none has words she can report of
thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-
time's here

In June, and many a scythe in sunshine
flames,

Men who through those wide fields of
breezy grass

Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the
glittering Thames,

To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near

Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure
spare,

Thy dark vague eyes, and soft ab-
stracted air;

But, when they came from bathing, thou
wert gone.

At some lone homestead in the Cumner
hills,

Where at her open door the housewife
darns,

Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a
gate

To watch the threshers in the mossy
barns.

Children, who early range these slopes
and late

For cresses from the rills,

Have known thee watching, all an April
day,

The springing pastures and the feeding
kine;

And mark'd thee, when the stars come
out and shine,

Through the long dewy grass move slow
away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,
Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edg'd
way

Pitch their smok'd tents, and every
bush you see

With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds
of grey,

Above the forest ground call'd Thes-
saly—

The blackbird picking food

Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears
at all;

So often has he known thee past him
stray

Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd
spray,

And waiting for the spark from Heaven
to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-
travellers go,

Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden
bridge

Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with
the snow,

Thy face towards Hinksey and its
wintry ridge?

And thou hast climb'd the hill

And gain'd the white brow of the Cum-
ner range,

Turn'd once to watch, while thick the
snowflakes fall,

The line of festal light in Christ-
Church hall—

Then sought thy straw in some se-
quester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years
are flown

Since first thy story ran through Oxford
halls,

And the grave Glanvil did the tale
inscribe

That thou wert wander'd from the studi-
ous walls

To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy
tribe:

And thou from earth art gone

Long since, and in some quiet church-
yard laid;

Some country nook, where o'er thy
unknown grave

Tall grasses and white flowering nettles
wave—

Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's
shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of
hours.

For what wears out the life of mortal
men?

'Tis that from change to change their
being rolls:

'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.

Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and
 teen,
 And tir'd upon a thousand schemes our
 wit,
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit
 Our worn-out life, and are — what we
 have been.

Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou
 perish, so?
 Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one*
 desire:
 Else wert thou long since number'd
 with the dead —
 Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy
 fire,
 The generations of thy peers are fled,
 And we ourselves shall go;
 But thou possessest an immortal lot,
 And we imagine thee exempt from age
 And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's
 page,
 Because thou hadst — what we, alas, have
 not!

For early didst thou leave the world, with
 powers
 Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
 Firm to their mark, not spent on other
 things;
 Free from the sick fatigue, the languid
 doubt,
 Which much to have tried, in much
 been baffled, brings,
 O Life unlike to ours!
 Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
 Of whom each strives, nor knows for
 what he strives,
 And each half lives a hundred different
 lives;
 Who wait like thee, but not, like thee,
 in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven:
 and we,
 Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
 Who never deeply felt, nor clearly
 will'd,
 Whose insight never has borne fruit in
 deeds,
 Whose vague resolves never have been
 fulfill'd;
 For whom each year we see
 Breeds new beginnings, disappointments
 new;
 Who hesitate and falter life away,
 And lose to-morrow the ground won
 to-day —
 Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,
 And then we suffer; and amongst us
 One,
 Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly

His seat upon the intellectual throne;
 And all his store of sad experience he
 Lays bare of wretched days;
 Tells us his misery's birth and growth
 and signs,
 And how the dying spark of hope was
 fed,
 And how the breast was sooth'd, and
 how the head,
 And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pine,
 And wish the long unhappy dream would
 end,
 And waive all claim to bliss, and try
 to bear
 With close-lipp'd Patience for our only
 friend,
 Sad Patience, too near neighbour to
 Despair:
 But none has hope like thine.
 Thou through the fields and through the
 woods dost stray,
 Roaming the country side, a truant
 boy,
 Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
 And every doubt long blown by time
 away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and
 clear,
 And life ran gaily as the sparkling
 Thames;
 Before this strange disease of modern
 life,
 With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
 Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts,
 was rife —
 Fly hence, our contact fear!
 Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering
 wood!
 Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
 From her false friend's approach in
 Hades turn,
 Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
 Still clutching the inviolable shade,
 With a free onward impulse brushing
 through,
 By night, the silver'd branches of the
 glade —
 Far on the forest skirts, where none
 pursue
 On some mild pastoral slope
 Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
 Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
 With dew, or listen with enchanted
 ears,
 From the dark dingles, to the nightin-
 gales.

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
 For strong the infection of our mental
 strife,

Which, though it gives no bliss, yet
spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own
fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd
thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shift-
ing made:
And then thy glad perennial youth
would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like
ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and
smiles!
— As some grave Tyrian trader, from the
sea.
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing
brow
Among the Aegean isles:
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and
Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd
in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient
home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the
waves;
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out
more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the
gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent
sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs,
through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

[1855.]

THROUGH Alpine meadows, soft-suffused
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
Past the dark forges long disused,
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While hark, far down, with strangled sound
Doth the Dead Guiers' stream complain,
Where that wet smoke among the woods
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
Showing — then blotting from our sight.
Halt! through the cloud-drift something
shines!
High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courgerie appear.

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and
higher
Mounts up the stony forest-way.
At last encircling trees retire;
Look! through the showery twilight grey
What pointed roofs are these advance?
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here.
Alight and sparely sup and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate;
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day
Into their stone-carved basins cold
The splashing icy fountains play,
The humid corridors behold,
Where ghostlike in the deepening night
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white:

The chapel, where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer.
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle; rising then, with bare
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Each takes; and then his visage wan
Is buried in his cowl once more.
The cells — the suffering Son of Man
Upon the wall! the knee-worn floor!
And, where they sleep, that wooden bed,
Which shall their coffin be, when dead.

The library, where tract and tome
Not to feed priestly pride are there,
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are;
They paint of souls the inner strife,
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown — yet mild
Those fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls too, destined to contain
Each its own pilgrim host of old,
From England, Germany, or Spain —
All are before me! I behold
The House, the Brotherhood austere!
And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,
Show'd me the high white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire;
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!
At whose behest I long ago
So much unlearn't, so much resign'd!
I come not here to be your foe.
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend or child I speak!
But as on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride;
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me
round,
Till I possess my soul again!
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control.

For the world cries your faith is now
But a dead time's exploded dream;
My melancholy, sciolists say,
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme—
As if the world had ever had
A faith, or sciolists been sad.

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,
At least, the restlessness—the pain!
Be man henceforth no more a prey
To these out-dated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But, if you cannot give us ease,
Last of the race of them who grieve
Here leave us to die out with these
Last of the people who believe!
Silent, while years engrave the brow;
Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb;
Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail;
Their voices were in all men's ears
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same Ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
And outcry of the former men?
Say, have their sons obtain'd more joys?
Say, is life lighter now than then?
The sufferers died, they left their pain;
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the
smart,
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
Carried thy lovely wail away,
Musical through Italian trees
That fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
Inheritors of thy distress
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,
Which tells us how thou hid'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!
The world, which for an idle day
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
Long since hath flung her weeds away.
The eternal trifter breaks your spell;
But we—we learnt your lore too well!

There may, perhaps, yet dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity.
Sons of the world, oh, haste those years;
But, till they rise, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe
The exulting thunder of your race;
You give the universe your law,
You triumph over time and space.
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
We mark them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall
Forgotten in a forest-glade
And secret from the eyes of all;
Deep, deep the greenwood round them
waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves.

But, where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam —
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war.

And through the woods, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some old forest-lodge at morn;
Gay dames are there in sylvan green,
Laughter and cries — those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their
eyes;

That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply? —
'Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry
And call us? but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow
Whose bent was taken long ago.

'Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

'Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How should we flower in foreign air?
Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease!
And leave our desert to its peace!

TO MARGUERITE

[1857.]

WE were apart! yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be;
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learn'd —
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith is often unreturn'd.
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell!
Thou lov'st no more; — Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell! — and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spherèd course
To haunt the place where passions reign —
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer-night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep —

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far removed;
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth — to prove, and make thine own:
'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.'

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things —
Ocean and clouds and night and day;
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men! — for they, at least,
Have *dream'd* two human hearts might
blend

In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolong'd; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness!

THYRSIS

[1867.]

A MONODY, to commemorate the author's
friend, ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, who
died at Florence, 1861.

Thus yesterday, to-day, to-morrow come,
They hustle one another and they pass;
But all our hustling morrows only make
The smooth to-day of God.
From LUCRETIVS, an unpublished Tragedy.

How changed is here each spot man makes
or fills!

In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the
same;

The village-street its haunted mansion
lacks,

And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chim-
ney-stacks;

Are ye too changed, ye hills?

See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men

To-night from Oxford up your path-
way strays!

Here came I often, often, in old days;
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth
Farm,

Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree
crowns

The hill behind whose ridge the sunset
flames?

The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley
Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the
youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air; leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and
briers;
And that sweet City with her dreaming
spires,
She needs not June for beauty's height-
ening.

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's
power
Befalls me wandering through this up-
land dim;
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour,
Now seldom come I, since I came with
him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood,
we said,
Our friend, the Scholar-Gipsy, was not
dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields
lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits
here!
But once I knew each field, each flower,
each stick;
And with the country-folk acquaintance
made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built
rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first
assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with
heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men de-
part;
But Thyrasis of his own will went away.
It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country
yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could
not keep,
For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly
sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and
fill'd his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled
sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy
ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is
dead!

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is
o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks, and all the grassy
floor,
With blossoms, red and white, of fallen
May,
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext
garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and toss-
ing breeze:
*The bloom is gone, and with the bloom
go I.*

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou
go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps
come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break
and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snap-
dragon,
Sweet-William with its homely cottage-
smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden
trees,
And the full moon, and the white eve-
ning star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will re-
turn,
And we shall have him in the sweet
spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling
fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-
ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrasis never more we swains shall
see!
See him come back, and cut a smoother
reed,
And blow a strain the world at last
shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd
thee.

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute
would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate,
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,

And make leap up with joy the beauteous
 head
 Of Prosperine, among whose crownèd
 hair
 Are flowers, first open'd on Sicilian air,
 And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from
 the dead.

O easy access to the hearer's grace
 When Dorian shepherds sang to Pro-
 serpine!
 For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
 She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
 She knew each lily white which Enna
 yields,
 Each rose with blushing face;
 She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian
 strain.
 But ah, of our poor Thames she never
 heard!
 Her foot the Cumner cowslips never
 stirr'd!
 And we should tease her with our plaint
 in vain.

Well! wind-dispers'd and vain the words
 will be,
 Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its
 hour
 In the old haunt, and find our tree-
 topp'd hill!
 Who, if not I, for questing here hath
 power?
 I know the wood which hides the
 daffodil,
 I know the Fyfield tree,
 I know what white, what purple fritil-
 laries
 The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
 Above by Ensham, down by Sandford,
 yields,
 And what sedg'd brooks are Thames's
 tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if
 not I?—
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
 With thorns once studded, old, white-
 blossom'd trees,
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and far
 desried,
 High tower'd the spikes of purple
 orchises,
 Hath since our day put by
 The coronals of that forgotten time.
 Down each green bank hath gone the
 ploughboy's team,
 And only in the hidden brookside gleam
 Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who, by the boatman's
 door,
 Above the locks, above the boating
 throng,
 Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the
 Wyatham flats,

Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet
 among,
 And darting swallows, and light water-
 gnats,
 We track'd the shy Thames shore?
 Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny
 swell
 Of our boat passing heav'd the river-
 grass,
 Stood with suspended scythe to see us
 pass?—
 They all are gone, and thou art gone as
 well.

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the
 night
 In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
 I see her veil draw soft across the day,
 I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
 The cheek grown thin, the brown hair
 sprent with grey;
 I feel her finger light
 Laid pausefully upon life's headlong
 train;
 The foot less prompt to meet the morn-
 ing dew,
 The heart less bounding at emotion
 new,
 And hope, once crush'd, less quick to
 spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd
 so short
 To the unpractis'd eye of sanguine youth;
 And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy
 air,
 The mountain-tops where is the throne
 of Truth,
 Tops in life's morning-sun so bright
 and bare!
 Unbreachable the fort
 Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its
 wall.
 And strange and vain the earthly tur-
 moil grows,
 And near and real the charm of thy
 repose,
 And night as welcome as a friend would
 fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
 Of quiet;—Look! adown the dusk hill-
 side,
 A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
 As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
 From hunting with the Berkshire
 hounds they come—
 Quick let me fly, and cross
 Into your further field!—"Tis done; and
 see,
 Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
 The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
 Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the
 Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
 The white fog creeps from bush to bush
 about,
 The west unflushes, the high stars grow
 bright,
 And in the scatter'd farms the lights
 come out.
 I cannot reach the Signal-Tree to-night,
 Yet, happy omen, hail!
 Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno vale
 (For there thine earth-forgetting eye-
 lids keep
 The morningless and unawakening
 sleep
 Under the flowery oleanders pale),
 Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our Tree is there!
 Ah, vain! These English fields, this up-
 land dim,
 These brambles pale with mist engar-
 landed,
 That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for
 him.
 To a boon southern country he is fled,
 And now in happier air,
 Wandering with the great Mother's train
 divine
 (And purer or more subtle soul than
 thee,
 I trow, the mighty Mother doth not
 see!)
 Within a folding of the Apennine,
 Thou hearest the immortal strains of old.
 Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
 In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian
 king,
 For thee the Lityerses song again
 Young Daphnis with his silver voice
 doth sing;
 Sings his Sicilian fold,
 His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded
 eyes;
 And how a call celestial round him rang
 And heavenward from the fountain-
 brink he sprang,
 And all the marvel of the golden skies.
 There thou art gone, and me thou leavest
 here
 Sole in these fields; yet will I not de-
 spair;
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry
 'Neath the soft canopy of English air
 That lonely Tree against the western
 sky
 Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
 Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
 Fields where soft sheep from cages pull
 the hay,
 Woods with anemones in flower till
 May,
 Know him a wanderer still; then why not
 me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
 Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
 This does not come with houses or with
 gold,
 With place, with honour, and a flattering
 crew;
 'Tis not in the world's market bought
 and sold.
 But the smooth-slipping weeks
 Drop by, and leave its seeker still un-
 tired;
 Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
 He wends unfollow'd, he must house
 alone;
 Yet on he fares, by his own heart in-
 spired.
 Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wert
 bound,
 Thou wanderest with me for a little
 hour;
 Men gave thee nothing, but this happy
 quest,
 If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee
 power,
 If men procured thee trouble, gave
 thee rest.
 And this rude Cumner ground,
 Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet
 fields,
 Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful
 time,
 Here was thine height of strength, thy
 golden prime;
 And still the haunt beloved a virtue
 yields.
 What though the music of thy rustic flute
 Kept not for long its happy, country tone,
 Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy
 note,
 Of men contention-tost, of men who
 groan,
 Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and
 tired thy throat—
 It fail'd, and thou wast mute;
 Yet hadst thou alway visions of our
 light,
 And long with men of care thou couldst
 not stay,
 And soon thy foot resumed its wander-
 ing way,
 Left human haunt, and on alone till
 night.
 Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits
 here!
 'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
 Thyrsis, in reach of sheep-bells is my
 home!
 Then through the great town's harsh,
 heart-wearying roar,
 Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
 To chase fatigue and fear:

Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.

Roam on! the light we sought is shining still.

*Dost thou ask proof? Our Tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.*

EAST LONDON

[1867.]

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited;

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
'Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?'

'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*'

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

WEST LONDON

[1867.]

CROUCH'D on the pavement close by Belgrave Square
A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied;
A babe was in her arms, and at her side
A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.

Some labouring men, whose work lay somewhere there,
Pass'd opposite; she touch'd her girl, who hid

Across, and begg'd, and came back satisfied.
The rich she had let pass with frozen stare.

Thought I: Above her state this spirit towers;
She will not ask of aliens, but of friends,
Of sharers in a common human fate.

She turns from that cold succour, which attends
The unknown little from the unknowing great,
And points us to a better time than ours.

ANTI-DESPERATION

[1867.]

LONG fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
Christ, some one says, was human as we are;

No judge eyes us from heaven, our sin to scan;

We live no more, when we have done our span.

'Well, then, for Christ,' thou answerest,
'who can care?'

From sin, which heaven records not, why forbear?

Live we like brutes our life without a plan!'

So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
'Hath man no second life? — Pitch this one high!

Sits there no judge in heaven, our sin to see? —

'More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us? — Ah! let us try

If we then, too, can be such men as he!'

IMMORTALITY

[1867.]

FOIL'D by our fellow men, depress'd, outworn,

We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience! in another life, we say,*
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne!

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn

The world's poor, routed leavings; or will they,

Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?'

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing — only he,

His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

WORLDLY PLACE

[1867.]

Even in a palace, life may be led well!
So spoke the imperial sage, purest of men,
Marcus Aurelius. — But the stifling den
Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,

Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
And drudge under some foolish master's
ken,

Who rates us, if we peer outside our pen—
Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell?

Even in a palace! On his truth sincere,
Who spoke these words, no shadow ever
came;

And when my ill-school'd spirit is aflame

Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,
I'll stop, and say: 'There were no suc-
cour here!

The aids to noble life are all within.'

AUSTERITY OF POETRY

[1867.]

THAT son of Italy who tried to blow,¹
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did
glow

Youth like a star; and what to youth be-
long,

Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation
strong.

A prop gave way! crash fell a platform!
lo,

Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she
lay!

Shuddering they drew her garments off —
and found

A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white
skin.

'Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young,
gay,

Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

EAST AND WEST

[1867.]

IN the bare midst of Anglesey they show
Two springs which close by one another
play,

And, 'Thirteen hundred years ago,' they
say,

'Two saints met often where those waters
flow.

'One came from Penmon, westward, and a
glow

Whiten'd his face from the sun's fronting
ray.

Eastward the other, from the dying day;
And he with unsunn'd face did always go.'

¹ Giacomone di Todi.

Seiriol the Bright, Kybi the Dark, men said,
The Seër from the East was then in light,
The Seër from the West was then in shade.

Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sun-
shine bright

The man of the bold West now comes
array'd;

He of the mystic East is touch'd with night.

DOVER BEACH

[1867.]

THE sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the Straits; — on the French coast,
the light

Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England
stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil
bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night
air!

Only, from the long line of spray
Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd
sand,

Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and
fling,

At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round
earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath

Of the great-wind down the vast edges
drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle
and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

*Depth of pessimism not characteristic
of Arnold.*

GROWING OLD

[1867.]

WHAT is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The lustre of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
Not our bloom only, but our strength—
decay?

Is it to feel each limb
Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
Each nerve more weakly strung?

Yes, this, and more! but not,
Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dream'd
'twould be!

'Tis not to have our life
Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset glow,
A golden day's decline!

'Tis not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
And heart profoundly stirr'd;
And weep, and feel the fullness of the past,
The years that are no more!

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever
young.

It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

THE LAST WORD

[1867.]

CREEP into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thy onset! all stands fast;
Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou art tired; best be still!

They out-talk'd thee, hissed thee, tore thee.
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and broke at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

A WISH

[1867.]

I ASK not that my bed of death
From bands of greedy heirs be free;
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favour'd sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears;
Let those who will, if any, weep!
There are worse plagues on earth than
tears.

I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind,
Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All, that makes death a hideous show!

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother doctor of the soul,
To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things—
That undiscover'd mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing
wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these! but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wide aerial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born.
The world which lasts when I am dead.

Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze, till I become
In soul with what I gaze on wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind—instead

Of the sick-room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath—
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death.

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Compos'd, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

PIS-ALLER

[1867.]

'MAN is blind because of sin;
Revelation makes him sure.
Without that, who looks within,
Looks in vain, for all's obscure.'

Nay, look closer into man!
Tell me, can you find indeed
Nothing sure, no moral plan
Clear prescribed, without your creed?

'No, I nothing can perceive;
Without that, all 's dark for men.
That, or nothing, I believe.'—
For God's sake, believe it then!

RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER, 1857

[1867.]

*is best buried
etc without
speak.*

COLDLY, sadly descends
The autumn evening. The Field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows; but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The Chapel walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back in the light
Of thy radiant vigour again!
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not of gloom at thy side;
Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thine even cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast; and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,

We who till then in thy shade
Rest'd as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,
Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live,
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraiest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly represseth the bad.
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succourest;—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?—
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing, and then they die—
Perish; and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes, some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance! but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow!
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth;
Then, on the height, comes the storm!

Thunder crashes from rock
 To rock, the cataracts reply;
 Lightnings dazzle our eyes;
 Roaring torrents have breach'd
 The track, the stream-bed descends
 In the place where the wayfarer once
 Planted his footstep—the spray
 Boils o'er its borders; aloft,
 The unseen snow-beds dislodge
 Their hanging ruin;—alas,
 Havoc is made in our train!
 Friends who set forth at our side
 Falter, are lost in the storm!
 We, we only, are left!
 With frowning foreheads, with lips
 Sternly compress'd, we strain on,
 On—and at nightfall, at last,
 Come to the end of our way,
 To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
 Where the gaunt and taciturn Host
 Stands on the threshold, the wind
 Shaking his thin white hairs—
 Holds his lantern to scan
 Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
 Whom in our party we bring?
 Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
 Only ourselves; we lost
 Sight of the rest in the storm.
 Hardly ourselves we fought through,
 Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
 Friends, companions, and train
 The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
 Be saved, my father! *alone*
 Conquer and come to thy goal,
 Leaving the rest in the wild.
 We were weary, and we
 Fearful, and we, in our march,
 Fain to drop down and to die.
 Still thou turnedst, and still
 Beckonedst the trembler, and still
 Gavest the weary thy hand!
 If, in the paths of the world,
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing! to us thou wert still
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm.
 Therefore to thee it was given
 Many to save with thyself;
 And, at the end of thy day,
 O faithful shepherd! to come,
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe
 In the noble and great who are gone;
 Pure souls honour'd and blest
 By former ages, who else—

Such, so soulless, so poor,
 Is the race of men whom I see—
 Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
 Seem'd but a cry of desire.
 Yes! I believe that there lived
 Others like thee in the past,
 Not like the men of the crowd
 Who all round me to-day
 Bluster or cringe, and make life
 Hideous, and arid, and vile;
 But souls temper'd with fire,
 Fervent, heroic, and good,
 Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God!—or sons
 Shall I not call you? because
 Not as servants ye knew
 Your Father's innermost mind,
 His, who unwillingly sees
 One of his little ones lost—
 Yours is the praise, if mankind
 Hath not as yet in its march
 Fainted, and fallen, and died!
 See! in the rocks of the world
 Marches the host of mankind,
 A feeble, wavering line.
 Where are they tending?—A God
 Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.—
 Ah, but the way is so long!
 Years they have been in the wild!
 Sore thirst plagues them; the rocks,
 Rising all round, overawe.
 Factions divide them; their host
 Threatens to break, to dissolve.
 Ah, keep, keep them combined!
 Else, of the myriads who fill
 That army, not one shall arrive!
 Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
 Labour for ever in vain,
 Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
 Of your fainting, dispirited race,
 Ye, like angels, appear,
 Radiant with ardour divine.
 Beacons of hope, ye appear!
 Languor is not in your heart,
 Weakness is not in your word,
 Weariness not on your brow.
 Ye alight in our van; at your voice,
 Panic, despair, flee away.
 Ye move through the ranks, recall
 The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
 Praise, re-inspire the brave.
 Order, courage, return.
 Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
 Follow your steps as ye go.
 Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
 Strengthen the wavering line,
 Stablish, continue our march,
 On, to the bound of the waste,
 On, to the City of God.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

[1809-1883]

THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

[1859, 1868, 1872, 1879.]

I

WAKE! For the Sun who scatter'd into
flight
The Stars before him from the Field of
Night,
Drives Night along with them from
Heav'n and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,¹
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
"When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper out-
side?"

III

And, as the cock crew, those who stood
before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to
stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,²
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES ON
the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground sus-
pires.³

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,⁴
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no
one knows;
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

¹ The "false dawn," a well-known phenomenon in the East, is a transient light appearing on the horizon about an hour before the true dawn.

² A new year beginning with the vernal equinox, about the 21st of March, is still commemorated by a Persian festival. The "white hand of Moses" is a figure for May blossoms.

³ Jesus suspiring from the ground has reference to his healing power, which according to the Persians resided in his breath.

⁴ Iram, planted by King Shaddád, and now sunk somewhere in the Sands of Arabia. Jamshyd's Seven-ring'd Cup was typical of the 7 Heavens, 7 Planets, 7 Seas, etc., and was a Divining Cup (Edward Fitzgerald). Jamshyd is a mythical Persian king.

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi,⁵ with "Wine! Wine!
Wine!

Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to
the Rose
That sallow cheek⁶ of hers to incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by
drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each morn a thousand Roses brings, you
say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yester-
day?
And this first Summer month that brings
the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád⁷ away.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,⁸
Or Hátim call to supper—heed not you.

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown.
Where name of Slave and Sultán is for-
got—
And Peace to Mahmúd⁹ on his golden
Throne!

⁵ Pehlevi, probably Sanscrit.

⁶ Yellow-roses, common in Persia, are referred to.

⁷ Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú are Persian sovereigns.

⁸ Rustum is the Hercules of Persia; Zál, his father.

⁹ Probably Mahmúd of Ghazni, the Persian conqueror who flourished in the tenth century.

XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and
Thou

Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and
some

Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!¹⁰

XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden
throw."

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like
Rain,

Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts
upon

Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and
Day,

How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

XVIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and
drank deep:¹¹

And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the
Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his
Sleep.

XIX

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely
Head.

¹⁰ Beaten outside a palace.

¹¹ Persepolis, an ancient city of Persia, now in ruins, supposed to have been built by the Sultán Jamshyd. Bahrám was another Persian sovereign of luxurious habits.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs un-
seen!

XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regret and future Fears:
To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may
be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand
Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the
best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath
prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two
before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new
bloom,

Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of
Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—
for whom?

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may
spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and
— sans End!

XXV

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after some To-morrow
stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness
cries,
"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor
There."

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who dis-
cuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are
thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words
to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt
with Dust.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argu-
ment

About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door where in I
went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make
it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I
reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flow-
ing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried
Whence?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried
hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Sev-
enth Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no
Key;
There was the Veil through which I might
not see:
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE
and ME.¹²

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the seas that
mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs
reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and
Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the THEE in ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN
THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While
you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall
return."

¹² Me-and-Thee denotes some dividual existence
or personality distinct from the whole.

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I
kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay;
And with its all-obiterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently,
pray!"

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we
throw¹³
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some
Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup,
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks
up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplex not more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you
press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are To-DAY what YES-
TERDAY
You were—To-MORROW you shall not be
less.

XLIII

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall
not shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a
Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

¹³ The custom, still extant in Persia, of throwing
a little wine on the ground to refresh the dust of
some poor wine-drinker who is dead.

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's
rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death address;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like
no more;
The Eternal Sáki¹⁴ from the Bowl has
pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World
shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure
heeds
As the Sev'n Seas should heed a pebble-
cast.

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has
reacht
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make
haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence
spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and
True—
And upon what, prithee, does life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and
True—
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-
house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's
veins
Running Quicksilver-like, eludes your
pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;¹⁵
and
They change and perish all—but He re-
mains;

LII

A moment guess'd—then back behind the
Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama
roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth himself contrive, enact, behold.

LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening
Door,
You gaze To-day, while You are You—
how then
T-morrow, when You shall be You no
more?

LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain
pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave
Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my
Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to
Spouse.

LVI

For "Is" and "Is-not" though with Rule
and Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—
Nay,
Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Game shining through the Dusk an Angel
Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the
Grape!

LIX

The Grape that can with Logic Absolute
The Two and Seventy jarring Sects con-
fute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde¹⁶
Of fears and Sorrows that infest the
Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind
Sword.

¹⁴ Sáki is the cup-bearer and dispenser of wine.

¹⁵ From fish to moon.

¹⁶ An allusion to the Sultan Mahmúd's conquest of India and its dark people.

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God,
 who dare
 Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
 A Blessing, we should use it, should we
 not?
 And if a Curse — why, then, Who set it
 there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
 Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on
 trust,
 Or lured with Hope of some Diviner
 Drink,
 To fill the Cup — when crumbled into
 Dust!

LXIII

O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
 One thing at least is certain — *This Life*
 flies:
 One thing is certain and the rest is Lies!
 The Flower that once has blown for ever
 dies.

LXIV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads
 who
 Before us pass'd the door of Darkness
 through,
 Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
 Which to discover we must travel too

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
 Who rose before us, and as Prophets
 burn'd,
 Are all but Stories, which, awake from
 Sleep
 They told their comrades, and to Sleep re-
 turn'd.

LXVI

I sent my soul through the Invisible,
 Some letter of that After-life to spell;
 And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
 And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and
 Hell!"

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
 And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
 Cast on the Darkness into which Our-
 selves,
 So late emerg'd from, shall so soon ex-
 pire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
 Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the Sun-illum'd Lantern
 held
 In Midnight by the Master of the Show;"

"A revolving magic lantern, still used in India,
 with various figures painted inside.

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
 Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and
 Days;
 Hither and thither moves, and checks, and
 slays,
 And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and
 Noes,
 But Here or There as strikes the Player
 goes;
 And He that toss'd you down into the
 Field,
 He knows about it all — HE knows — HE
 knows!

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes: and, having
 writ,
 Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
 Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and
 die,
 Lift not your hands to *It* for help —
 for *It*
 As impotently moves as you or I.

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last
 Man knead,
 And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the
 Seed;
 And the first Morning of Creation wrote
 What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall
 read.

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This Day's* Madness did pre-
 pare;
 To-Morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
 Drink! for you know not whence you
 came, nor why:
 Drink! for you know not why you go, nor
 where.

LXXV

I tell you this — When, started from the
 Goal,
 Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
 Of Heav'n's Parwin and Mushari they
 flung
 In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
 If slings my Being — let the Dervish flout:
 Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
 That shall unlock the Door he howls with-
 out.

"Parwin and Mushari are the Pleiads and
 Jupiter.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True
 Light
 Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me
 quite,
 One Flash of It within the Tavern
 caught
 Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
 A conscious Something to resent the yoke
 Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
 Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be re-
 paid
 Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-
 allay'd —
 Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
 And cannot answer — Oh, the sorry trade!

LXXX

O Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with
 Gin
 Beset the Road I was to wander in,
 Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil
 round
 Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

LXXXI

O Thou, who Man of Baser Earth didst
 make,
 And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
 For all the Sin wherewith the Face of
 Man
 Is blacken'd — Man's forgiveness give —
 and take!

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
 Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán²⁰ away,
 Once more within the Potter's house
 alone
 I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of
 Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and
 small,
 That stood along the floor and by the wall;
 And some loquacious Vessels were; and
 some
 Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them — "Surely not in vain
 "My substance of the common Earth was
 ta'en
 "And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
 "Or trampled back to shapeless Earth
 again."

LXXXV

Then said a Second — "Ne'er a peevish Boy
 "Would break the Bowl from which he
 drank in joy;
 "And He that with his hand the Vessel
 made
 "Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
 Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make;
 "They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
 "What! did the Hand then of the Potter
 shake?"

LXXXVII

Whereat someone of the loquacious Lot —
 I think a Sûfi pipkin — waxing hot —
 "All this of Pot and Potter — Tell me
 then,
 "Who is the Potter, pray, and who the
 Pot?"

LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who
 tell
 "Of one who threatens he will toss to
 Hell
 "The luckless Pots he marr'd in mak-
 ing — Fish!
 "He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be
 well."

LXXXIX

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make
 or buy,
 "My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
 "But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
 "Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were
 speaking,
 The little Moon look'd in that all were
 seeking:
 And then they jogg'd each other,
 "Brother! Brother!
 "Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot
 a-creaking!"

XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
 And wash the Body whence the Life has
 died,
 And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
 By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
 Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
 As not a True believer passing by
 But shall be overtaken unaware.

²⁰ Ramazán, the Mohammedan month of fasting.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
 Have done my credit in this World much
 wrong:
 Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow
 Cup,
 And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XCIV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
 I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
 And then and then came Spring, and
 Rose-in-hand
 My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
 And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—
 Well,
 I wonder often what the Vintners buy
 One-half so precious as the stuff they sell.

XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the
 Rose!
 That Youth's sweet scented manuscript
 should close!
 The Nightingale that in the branches
 sang,
 Ah whence, and whither flown again, who
 knows!

XCVII

Would but the desert of the Fountain yield
 One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, re-
 veal'd,

To which the fainting Traveler might
 spring,
 As springs the trampled herbage of the
 field!

XCVIII

Would but some wing'd Angel ere too late
 Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
 And make the stern Recorder otherwise
 Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him con-
 spire
 To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things
 entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits—and
 then
 Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
 How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
 How oft hereafter rising look for us
 Through this same Garden—and for *one*
 in vain!

CI

And when like her, O Sáki, you shall pass
 Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the
 Grass,
 And in your joyous errand reach the spot
 Where I made One—turn down an empty
 Glass!

this one great poem

JAMES THOMSON

[1834-1882]

FROM THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

[Published 1874.]

PROEM

Lo, THUS, as prostrate, "In the dust I write
My heart's deep languor and my soul's
sad tears."

Yet why evoke the spectres of black night
To blot the sunshine of exultant years?
Why disinter dead faith from mouldering
hidden?

Why break the seals of mute despair un-
bidden,
And wail life's discords into careless
ears?

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles
To show the bitter old and wrinkled
truth

Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,
False dreams, false hopes, false masks
and modes of youth;

Because it gives some sense of power and
passion

In helpless impotence to try to fashion
Our woe in living words howe'er uncouth.

Surely I write not for the hopeful young,
Or those who deem their happiness of
worth,

Or such as pasture and grow fat among
The shows of life and feel nor doubt nor
dearth,

Or pious spirits with a God above them
To sanctify and glorify and love them,
Or sages who foresee a heaven on earth.

For none of these I write, and none of these
Could read the writing if they deigned
to try:

So may they flourish, in their due degrees,
On our sweet earth and in their unplaced
sky.

If any cares for the weak words here
written,

It must be some one desolate, Fate-smitten,
Whose faith and hope are dead, and who
would die.

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
In that same city of tremendous night,
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;

"I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
Travels the same wild paths though out
of sight."

O sad Fraternity, do I unfold
Your dolorous mysteries shrouded from
of yore?

Nay, be assured; no secret can be told
To any who divined it not before:

None uninitiate by many a presage
Will comprehend the language of the mes-
sage,

Although proclaimed aloud for evermore.

I

The City is of Night; perchance of Death,
But certainly of Night; for never there
Can come the lucid morning's fragrant
breath

After the dewy dawning's cold grey air;
The moon and stars may shine with scorn
or pity;

The sun has never visited that city,
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.

Dissolveth like a dream of night away;
Though present in distempered gloom of
thought

And deadly weariness of heart all day.
But when a dream night after night is
brought

Throughout a week, and such weeks few or
many

Recur each year for several years, can any
Discern that dream from real life in
aught?

For life is but a dream whose shapes re-
turn,

Some frequently, some seldom, some by
night

And some by day, some night and day:
we learn,

The while all change and many vanish
quite,

In their recurrence with recurrent changes
A certain seeming order; where this ranges

We count things real; such is memory's
might.

A river girds the city west and south,
The main north channel of a broad la-
goon,

Regurging with the salt tides from the mouth;

Waste marshes shine and glisten to the moon

For leagues, then moorland black, then stony ridges;

Great piers and causeways, many noble bridges,

Connect the town and islet suburbs strewn.

Upon an easy slope it lies at large,
And scarcely overlaps the long curved crest

Which swells out two leagues from the river marge.

A trackless wilderness rolls north and west,

Savannahs, savage woods, enormous mountains,

Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains;

And eastward rolls the shipless sea's unrest.

The city is not ruinous, although

Great ruins of an unremembered past,

With others of a few short years ago
More sad, are found within its precincts vast.

The street-lamps always burn; but scarce a casement

In house or palace front from roof to basement

Doth glow or gleam athwart the mirk air cast.

The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms,

Amidst the soundless solitudes immense
Of ranged mansions dark and still as tombs.

The silence which benumbs or strains the sense

Fulfils with awe the soul's despair unweeping:

Myriads of habitants are ever sleeping,
Or dead, or fled from nameless pestilence!

Yet as in some necropolis you find

Perchance one mourner to a thousand dead,

So there; worn faces that look deaf and blind

Like tragic masks of stone. With weary tread,

Each wrapt in his own doom, they wander, wander,

Or sit foredone and desolately ponder

Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head.

Mature men chiefly, few in age or youth,
A woman rarely, now and then a child:
A child! If here the heart turns sick with ruth

To see a little one from birth defiled,
Or lame or blind, as preordained to languish

Through youthless life, think how it bleeds with anguish

To meet one erring in that homeless wild.

They often murmur to themselves, they speak

To one another seldom, for their woe
Broods maddening inwardly and scorns to wreak

Itself abroad; and if at whiles it grow
To frenzy which must rave, none heeds the clamour,

Unless there waits some victim of like glamour,

To rave in turn, who lends attentive show.

The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;

The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,
A night seems termless hell. This dreadful strain

Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,

Or which some moments' stupor but increases,

This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.

They leave all hope behind who enter there:
One certitude while sane they cannot leave,

One anodyne for torture and despair;

The certitude of Death, which no reprieve
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,

But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render

That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave.

IV

He stood alone within the spacious square
Declaiming from the central grassy mound,

With head uncovered and with streaming hair,

As if large multitudes were gathered round:

A stalwart shape, the gestures full of might,

The glances burning with unnatural light:

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: All was black,

In heaven no single star, on earth no track;

scalls
Chick Roland

A brooding hush without a stir or note,
The air so thick it clotted in my throat;
And thus for hours; then some enormous
things

Swooped past with savage cries and clank-
ing wings:

But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Eyes of fire
Glared at me throbbing with a starved de-
sire;

The hoarse and heavy and carnivorous
breath

Was hot upon me from deep jaws of
death;

Sharp claws, swift talons, fleshless fingers
cold

Plucked at me from the bushes, tried to
hold:

But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Lo you,
there,

That hillock burning with a brazen glare;
Those myriad dusky flames with points

a-glow
Which writhed and hissed and darted to
and fro;

A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-
mell

For Devil's roll-call and some fête of Hell:

Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert; Meteors ran
And crossed their javelins on the black
sky-span;

The zenith opened to a gulf of flame,
The dreadful thunderbolts jarred earth's

fixed frame;

The ground all heaved in waves of fire
that surged

And weltered round me sole there unsub-
merged:

Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Air once
more,

And I was close upon a wild sea-shore;
Enormous cliffs arose on either hand,

The deep tide thundered up a league-broad
strand;

White foambelts seethed there, wan spray
swept and flew;

The sky broke, moon and stars and clouds
and blue:

And I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: On the left
The sun arose and crowned a broad crag-
cleft;

There stopped and burned out black, except
a rim,

A bleeding eyeless socket, red and dim;
Whereon the moon fell suddenly south-
west,

And stood above the right-hand cliffs at
rest:

Still I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: From the
right

A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;
A woman with a red lamp in her hand,

Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;
O desolation moving with such grace!

O anguish with such beauty in thy face!

I fell as on my bier,
Hope travailed with such fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: I was

twain,

Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
One stood apart and knew but could not

stir,

And watched the other stark in swoon and
her;

And she came on, and never turned aside,
Between such sun and moon and roaring

tide:
And as she came more near
My soul grew mad with fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Hell is mild

And piteous matched with that accursed
wild;

A large black sign was on her breast that
bowed,

A broad black band ran down her snow-
white shroud;

That lamp she held was her own burning
heart,

Whose blood-drops trickled step by step
apart:

The mystery was clear;
Mad rage had swallowed fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: By the sea

She knelt and bent above that senseless me;
Those lamp-drops fell upon my white brow

there,

She tried to cleanse them with her tears
and hair;

She murmured words of pity, love, and
woe,

She heeded not the level rushing flow:
And mad with rage and fear,

I stood stonebound so near.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: When the
tide

Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they
were borne

Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;
I know the whole sea cannot quench that
heart,

Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two
apart:

They love; their doom is drear,
Yet they nor hope nor fear;
But I, what do I here?

VIII

While I still lingered on that river-walk,
And watched the tide as black as our
black doom,

I heard another couple join in talk,
And saw them to the left hand in the
gloom

Seated against an elm bole on the ground,
Their eyes intent upon the stream pro-
found.

"I never knew another man on earth
But had some joy and solace in his life,
Some chance of triumph in the dreadful
strife:

My doom has been unmitigated dearth."

"We gaze upon the river, and we note
The various vessels large and small that
float,

Ignoring every wrecked and sunken boat."

"And yet I asked no splendid dower, no
spoil

Of sway or fame or rank or even wealth;
But homely love with common food and
health,

And nightly sleep to balance daily toil."

"This all-too humble soul would arrogate
Unto itself some signalising hate
From the supreme indifference of Fate!"

"Who is most wretched in this dolorous
place?

I think myself; yet I would rather be
My miserable self than He, than He
Who formed such creatures to His own
disgrace.

"The vilest thing must be less vile than
Thou

From whom it had its being, God and
Lord!

Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred,
Malignant and implacable! I vow

"That not for all Thy power furled and
unfurled,

For all the temples to Thy glory built,
Would I assume the ignominious guilt
Of having made such men in such a world."

"As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign,
At once so wicked, foolish, and insane,
As to produce men when He might re-
frain!

"The world rolls round for ever like a
mill;

It grinds out death and life and good and
ill;

It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.

"While air of Space and Time's full river
flow

The mill must blindly whirl unresting so;
It may be wearing out, but who can
know?

"Man might know one thing were his sight
less dim;

That it whirls not to suit his petty whim,
That it is quite indifferent to him.

"Nay, does it treat him harshly as he
saith?

It grinds him some slow years of bitter
breath,

Then grinds him back into eternal death."

XII

Our isolated units could be brought

To act together for some common end?
For one by one, each silent with his
thought,

I marked a long loose line approach and
wend

Athwart the great cathedral's cloistered
square,

And slowly vanish from the moonlit air.

Then I would follow in among the last:

And in the porch a shrouded figure stood,
Who challenged each one pausing ere he
passed,

With deep eyes burning through a blank
white hood:

Whence come you in the world of life
and light

To this our City of Tremendous Night?—

From pleading in a senate of rich lords

For some scant justice to our countless
hordes

Who toil half-starved with scarce a human
right:

I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From wandering through many a solemn
scene

Of opium visions, with a heart serene

And intellect miraculously bright:

I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From making hundreds laugh and roar with
glee

By my transcendent feats of mimicry,
And humour wanton as an elfish sprite:

I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From prayer and fasting in a lonely cell,
Which brought an ecstasy ineffable
Of love and adoration and delight:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From ruling on a splendid kingly throne
A nation which beneath my rule has grown
Year after year in wealth and arts and
might:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From preaching to an audience fired with
faith
The Lamb who died to save our souls from
death,
Whose blood hath washed our scarlet sins
wool-white:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From drinking fiery poison in a den
Crowded with tawdry girls and squalid
men,
Who hoarsely laugh and curse and brawl
and fight:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From picturing with all beauty and all
grace
First Eden and the parents of our race,
A luminous rapture unto all men's sight:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From writing a great work with patient
plan
To justify the ways of God to man,
And show how ill must fade and perish
quite:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From desperate fighting with a little band
Against the powerful tyrants of our land,
To free our brethren in their own despite:
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

Thus, challenged by that warder sad and
stern,
Each one responded with his countersign,
Then entered the cathedral; and in turn
I entered also, having given mine:
But lingered near until I heard no more,
And marked the closing of the massive
door.

XIV

Large glooms were gathered in the mighty
fane,
With tinted moongleams slanting here
and there;
And all was hush: no swelling organ-
strain,
No chant, no voice or murmuring of
prayer;
No priests came forth, no tinkling censers
fumed,
And the high altar space was unillumed.

Around the pillars and against the walls
Leaned men and shadows; others seemed
to brood

Bent or recumbent in secluded stalls.
Perchance they were not a great multi-
tude

Save in that city of so lonely streets
Where one may count up every face he
meets.

All patiently awaited the event
Without a stir or sound, as if no less
Self-occupied, doomstricken, while attent.
And then we heard a voice of solemn
stress

From the dark pulpit, and our gaze there
met

Two eyes which burned as never eyes
burned yet:

Two steadfast and intolerable eyes
Burning beneath a broad and rugged
brow;

The head behind it of enormous size.
And as 'black fir-groves in a large wind
bow,

Our rooted congregation, gloom-arrayed,
By that great sad voice deep and full were
swayed:—

O melancholy Brothers, dark, dark, dark!
O battling in black floods without an
ark!

O spectral wanderers of unholy Night!
My soul hath bled for you these sunless
years.

With bitter blood-drops running down like
tears:

Oh, dark, dark, dark, withdrawn from
joy and light!

My heart is sick with anguish for your
bale;

Your woe hath been my anguish; yea, I
quail

And perish in your perishing unblest.
And I have searched the heights and
depths, the scope

Of all our universe, with desperate hope
To find some solace for your wild unrest.

And now at last authentic word I bring,
Witnessed by every dead and living thing;

Good tidings of great joy for you, for
all;

There is no God; no Fiend with names
divine

Made us and tortures us; if we must
pine,

It is to satiate no Being's gall.

It was the dark delusion of a dream,
That living Person conscious and supreme,
Whom we must curse for cursing us with
life;

Whom we must curse because the life He
gave
Could not be buried in the quiet grave,
Could not be killed by poison or by
knife.

This little life is all we must endure,
The grave's most holy peace is ever sure,
We fall asleep and never wake again;
Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh,
Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh
In earth, air, water, plants, and other
men.

We finish thus; and all our wretched race
Shall finish with its cycle, and give place
To other beings, with their own time-
doom;

Infinite aeons ere our kind began;
Infinite aeons after the last man
Has joined the mammoth in earth's tomb
and womb.

We bow down to the universal laws,
Which never had for man a special clause
Of cruelty or kindness, love or hate:
If toads and vultures are obscene to sight,
If tigers burn with beauty and with might,
Is it by favour or by wrath of fate?

All substance lives and struggles evermore
Through countless shapes continually at
war,

By countless interactions interknit:
If one is born a certain day on earth,
All times and forces tended to that birth,
Not all the world could change or hinder
it.

I find no hint throughout the Universe
Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;
I find alone Necessity Supreme;
With infinite Mystery, abysmal, dark,
Unlighted ever by the faintest spark
For us the flitting shadows of a dream.

O Brothers of sad lives! they are so brief;
A few short years must bring us all relief:
Can we not bear these years of labouring
breath?
But if you would not this poor life fulfil,
Lo, you are free to end it when you will,
Without the fear of waking after death.—

The organ-like vibrations of his voice
Thrilled through the vaulted aisles and
died away;

The yearning of the tones which bade
rejoice

Was sad and tender as a requiem lay:
Our shadowy congregation rested still
As brooding on that "End it when you
will."

xx

I sat me weary on a pillar's base,
And leaned against the shaft; for broad
moonlight
O'erflowed the peacefulness of cloistered
space,
A shore of shadow slanting from the
right:
The great cathedral's western front stood
there,
A wave-worn rock in that calm sea of air.

Before it, opposite my place of rest,
Two figures faced each other, large,
austere;
A couchant sphinx in shadow to the breast,
An angel standing in the moonlight
clear;
So mighty by magnificence of form,
They were not dwarfed beneath that mass
enorm.

Upon the cross-hilt of a naked sword *a*
The angel's hands, as prompt to smite, *b*
were held; *c*
His vigilant, intense regard was poured *d*
Upon the creature placidly unquelled,
Whose front was set at level gaze which
took
No heed of aught, a solemn trance-like
look.

And as I pondered these opposèd shapes
My eyelids sank in stupor, that dull
swoon
Which drugs and with a leaden mantle
drapes
The outworn to worse weariness. But
soon
A sharp and clashing noise the stillness
broke,
And from the evil lethargy I woke.

The angel's wings had fallen, stone on
stone,
And lay there shattered; hence the sud-
den sound:
A warrior leaning on his sword alone
Now watched the sphinx with that regard
profound;
The sphinx unchanged looked forthright,
as aware
Of nothing in the vast abyss of air.

Again I sank in that repose unsweet,
Again a clashing noise my slumber rent;
The warrior's sword lay broken at his
feet:
An unarmed man with raised hands im-
potent
Now stood before the sphinx, which ever
kept
Such mien as if with open eyes it slept.

My eyelids sank in spite of wonder grown;
A louder crash upstartled me in dread:
The man had fallen forward, stone on
stone,

And lay there shattered, with his trunk-
less head
Between the monster's large quiescent paws,
Beneath its grand front changeless as life's
laws.

The moon had circled westward full and
bright,

And made the temple-front a mystic
dream,

And bathed the whole enclosure with its
light,

The sworded angel's wrecks, the sphinx
supreme:

I pondered long that cold majestic face
Whose vision seemed of infinite void
space.

XXI

Anear the centre of that northern crest
Stands out a level upland bleak and bare,
From which the city east and south and
west

Sinks gently in long waves; and throned
there

An Image sits, stupendous, superhuman,
The bronze colossus of a winged Woman,
Upon a graded granite base foursquare.

Low-seated she leans forward massively,
With cheek on clenched left hand, the
forearm's might

Erect, its elbow on her rounded knee;
Across a clasped book in her lap the right

Upholds a pair of compasses; she gazes
With full set eyes, but wandering in thick
mazes

Of sombre thought beholds no outward
sight.

Words cannot picture her; but all men
know

That solemn sketch the pure sad artist
wrought

Three centuries and threescore years ago,
With phantasies of his peculiar thought:

The instruments of carpentry and science
Scattered about her feet, in strange alliance

With the keen wolf-hound sleeping un-
distracted;

Scales, hour-glass, bell, and magic-square
above;

The grave and solid infant perched be-
side,

With open winglets that might bear a dove,
Intent upon its tablets, heavy-eyed;

Her folded wings as of a mighty eagle,
But all too impotent to lift the regal

Robustness of her earth-born strength
and pride;

And with those wings, and that light
wreath which seems

To mock her grand head and the knotted
frown

Of forehead charged with baleful thoughts
and dreams,

The household bunch of keys, the house-
wife's gown

Voluminous, indented, and yet rigid
As if a shell of burnished metal frigid,

The feet thick-shod to tread all weak-
ness down;

The comet hanging o'er the waste dark
seas,

The massy rainbow curved in front of it,
Beyond the village with the masts and
trees;

The snaky imp, dog-headed, from the
Pit,

Bearing upon its batlike leathern pinions
Her name unfolded in the sun's dominions,

The "MELENCOLIA" than transcends all
wit.

Thus has the artist copied her, and thus
Surrounded to expound her form sublime,

Her fate heroic and calamitous;
Fronting the dreadful mysteries of Time,

Unvanquished in defeat and desolation,
Undaunted in the hopeless conflagration

Of the day setting on her baffled prime.

Baffled and beaten back she works on still,
Weary and sick of soul she works the
more,

Sustained by her indomitable will:
The hands shall fashion and the brain

shall pore,
And all her sorrow shall be turned to

labour,
Till Death the friend-foe piercing with his

sabre
That mighty heart of hearts ends bitter

war.

But as if blacker night could dawn on night,
With tenfold gloom on moonless night

unstarred,
A sense more tragic than defeat and blight,

More desperate than strife with hope de-
barred,

More fatal than the adamant Never
Encompassing her passionate endeavour,

Dawns glooming in her tenebrous regard:

The sense that every struggle brings defeat
Because Fate holds no prize to crown

success;

That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
Because they have no secret to express;

That none can pierce the vast black veil
uncertain

Because there is no light beyond the cur-
tain;

That all is vanity and nothingness.

Titanic from her high throne in the north,
That City's sombre Patroness and Queen,
In bronze sublimity she gazes forth
Over her Capital of teen and threne,
Over the river with its isles and bridges,
The marsh and moorland, to the stern rock-
ridges,
Confronting them with a coëval mien.

The moving moon and stars from east to
west
Circle before her in the sea of air;
Shadows and gleams glide round her sol-
emn rest.
Her subjects often gaze up to her there:
The strong to drink new strength of iron
endurance,
The weak new terrors; all, renewed assur-
ance
And confirmation of the old despair.

FROM SUNDAY UP THE RIVER

[First published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1869.]

VI

I love this hardy exercise,
This strenuous toil of boating:
Our skiff beneath the willow lies
Half stranded and half floating.
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of the blue and burn-
ing sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie
scene.

My shirt is of the soft red wool,
My cap is azure braided
By two white hands so beautiful,
My tie mauve purple-shaded.
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of white clouds and
sapphire sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie
scene.

Your hat with long blue streamers decked,
Your pure throat crimson-banded;
White-robed, my own white dove unflecked,
Dove-footed, lilac-handed.
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of white clouds and
sapphire sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie
scene.

If any boaters boating past
Should look where we're reclining,
They'll say, To-day green willows glassed
Rubies and sapphires shining!

As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of the blue and burn-
ing sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie
scene.

VII

Grey clouds come puffing from my lips
And hang there softly curling,
While from the bowl now leaps, now slips,
A steel-blue thread high twirling.
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath
the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss
serene.

I gaze on you and I am crowned,
A Monarch great and glorious,
A Hero in all realms renowned,
A Faerie Prince victorious.
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath
the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss
serene.

Your violet eyes pour out their whole
Pure light in earnest rapture;
Your thoughts come dreaming through my
soul,
And nestle past recapture.
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath
the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss
serene.

O friends, your best years to the oar
Like galley-slaves devoting,
This is and shall be evermore
The true sublime of boating!
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath
the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss
serene.

XV

Give a man a horse he can ride,
Give a man a boat he can sail;
And his rank and wealth, his strength and
health,
On sea nor shore shall fail.

Give a man a pipe he can smoke,
Give a man a book he can read;
And his home is bright with a calm delight,
Though the room be poor indeed.

Give a man a girl he can love,
As I, O my love, love thee;
And his heart is great with the pulse of
Fate,
At home, on land, on sea.

XVII

Let my voice ring out and over the earth,
Through all the grief and strife,
With a golden joy in a silver mirth:
Thank God for Life!

Let my voice swell out through the great
abyss
To the azure dome above,
With a chord of faith in the harp of bliss:
Thank God for Love!

Let my voice thrill out beneath and above,
The whole world through;
O my Love and Life, O my Life and Love,
Thank God for you!

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

(1830-1894)

GOBLIN MARKET

[1862.]

MORNING and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
'Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather, —
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy.'

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
'Lie close,' Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
'We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?'
'Come buy,' call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
'Oh,' cried Lizzie, 'Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.
Lizzie covered up her eyes,

Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
'Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes.'
'No,' said Lizzie: 'No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us.'
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and
furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
'Come buy, come buy.'
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);

One heaved the golden weight
 Of dish and fruit to offer her:
 'Come buy, come buy,' was still their cry.
 Laura stared but did not stir,
 Longed but had no money:
 The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
 In tones as smooth as honey,
 The cat-faced purr'd,
 The rat-paced spoke a word
 Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was
 heard;
 One parrot-voiced and jolly
 Cried 'Pretty Goblin' still for 'Pretty
 Polly';—
 One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
 'Good folk, I have no coin;
 To take were to purloin:
 I have no copper in my purse,
 I have no silver either,
 And all my gold is on the furze
 That shakes in windy weather
 Above the rusty heather.'
 'You have much gold upon your head,'
 They answered all together:
 'Buy from us with a golden curl.'
 She clipped a precious golden lock,
 She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
 Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
 Sweeter than honey from the rock,
 Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
 Clearer than water flowed that juice;
 She never tasted such before,
 How should it cloy with length of use?
 She sucked and sucked and sucked the
 more
 Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
 She sucked until her lips were sore;
 Then flung the emptied rinds away
 But gathered up one kernel stone,
 And knew not was it night or day
 As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
 Full of wise upbraidings:
 'Dear, you should not stay so late,
 Twilight is not good for maidens;
 Should not loiter in the glen
 In the haunts of goblin men.
 Do you not remember Jeanie,
 How she met them in the moonlight,
 Took their gifts both choice and many,
 Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
 Plucked from bowers
 Where summer ripens at all hours?
 But ever in the noonlight
 She pined and pined away;
 Sought them by night and day,
 Found them no more but dwindled and
 grew grey;
 Then fell with the first snow,
 While to this day no grass will grow
 Where she lies low:

I planted daisies there a year ago
 That never blow.
 You should not loiter so.'
 'Nay, hush,' said Laura:
 'Nay, hush, my sister:
 I ate and ate my fill,
 Yet my mouth waters still;
 To-morrow night I will
 Buy more:' and kissed her:
 'Have done with sorrow;
 I'll bring you plums to-morrow
 Fresh on their mother twigs,
 Cherries worth getting;
 You cannot think what figs
 My teeth have met in,
 What melons icy-cold
 Piled on a dish of gold
 Too huge for me to hold,
 What peaches with a velvet nap,
 Pellucid grapes without one seed:
 Odorous indeed must be the mead
 Whereon they grow, and pure the wave
 they drink
 With lilies at the brink,
 And sugar-sweet their sap.'

Golden head by golden head,
 Like two pigeons in one nest
 Folded in each other's wings,
 They lay down in their curtained bed:
 Like two blossoms on one stem,
 Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
 Like two wands of ivory
 Tipped with gold for awful kings.
 Moon and stars gazed in at them,
 Wind sang to them lullaby,
 Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
 Not a bat flapped to and fro
 Round their nest:
 Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
 Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
 When the first cock crowed his warning,
 Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
 Laura rose with Lizzie:
 Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
 Aired and set to rights the house,
 Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
 Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
 Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
 Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
 Talked as modest maidens should:
 Lizzie with an open heart,
 Laura in an absent dream,
 One content, one sick in part;
 One warbling for the mere bright day's
 delight,
 One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
 They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
 Lizzie most placid in her look,
 Laura most like a leaping flame.

They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
 Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
 Then turning homewards said: 'The sunset
 flushes
 Those furthest loftiest crags;
 Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
 No wilful squirrel wags,
 The beasts and birds are fast asleep.'
 But Laura loitered still among the rushes
 And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
 The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:
 Listening ever, but not catching
 The customary cry,
 'Come buy, come buy,'
 With its iterated jingle
 Of sugar-baited words:
 Not for all her watching
 Once discerning even one goblin
 Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
 Let alone the herds
 That used to tramp along the glen,
 In groups or single,
 Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, 'O Laura, come;
 I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
 You should not loiter longer at this brook:
 Come with me home.
 The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
 Each glowworm winks her spark,
 Let us get home before the night grows
 dark:
 For clouds may gather
 Though this is summer weather,
 Put out the lights and drench us through;
 Then if we lost our way what should we
 do?'

Laura turned cold as stone
 To find her sister heard that cry alone,
 That goblin cry,
 'Come buy our fruits, come buy.'
 Must she then buy no more such dainty
 fruit?
 Must she no more such succous pasture
 find,
 Gone deaf and blind?
 Her tree of life drooped from the root:
 She said not one word in her heart's sore
 ache;
 But peering thro' the dimness, nought dis-
 cerning,
 Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the
 way;
 So crept to bed, and lay
 Silent till Lizzie slept;
 Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
 And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire,
 and wept
 As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
 Laura kept watch in vain
 In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
 She never caught again the goblin cry:
 'Come buy, come buy;'—
 She never spied the goblin men
 Hawking their fruits along the glen:
 But when the noon waxed bright
 Her hair grew thin and grey;
 She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth
 turn
 To swift decay and burn
 Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
 She set it by a wall that faced the south;
 Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
 Watched for a waxing shoot,
 But there came none;
 It never saw the sun,
 It never felt the trickling moisture run:
 While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
 She dreamed of melons, as a traveller
 sees
 False waves in desert drouth
 With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
 And burns the thirstier in the sandful
 breeze.

She no more swept the house,
 Tended the fowls or cows,
 Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
 Brought water from the brook,
 But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
 And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
 To watch her sister's cankerous care
 Yet not to share.
 She night and morning
 Caught the goblins' cry:
 'Come buy our orchard fruits,
 Come buy, come buy;'—
 Beside the brook, along the glen,
 She heard the tramp of goblin men,
 The voice and stir
 Poor Laura could not hear;
 Longed to buy fruit to comfort her
 But feared to pay too dear.
 She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
 Who should have been a bride;
 But who for joys brides hope to have
 Fell sick and died
 In her gay prime,
 In earliest Winter time,
 With the first glazing rime,
 With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter
 time.

Till Laura dwindling
 Seemed knocking at Death's door:
 Then Lizzie weighed no more
 Better and worse;
 But put a silver penny in her purse,

Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with
clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes, —
Hugged her and kissed her:
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
'Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs.' —

'Good folk,' said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
'Give me much and many.' —
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
'Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,'
They answered grinning:
'Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you, and rest with us.' —
'Thank you,' said Lizzie: 'But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,

If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee.' —
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood, —
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously, —
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire, —
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee, —
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrugged all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like
curd.

At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
 Lizzie went her way;
 Knew not was it night or day;
 Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
 Threaded copse and dingle,
 And heard her penny jingle
 Bouncing in her purse,—
 Its bounce was music to her ear.
 She ran and ran
 As if she feared some goblin man
 Dogged her with gibe or curse
 Or something worse:
 But not one goblin skurried after,
 Nor was she pricked by fear;
 The kind heart made her windy-paced
 That urged her home quite out of breath
 with haste
 And inward laughter.

She cried 'Laura,' up the garden,
 'Did you miss me?
 Come and kiss me.
 Never mind my bruises,
 Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
 Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
 Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
 Eat me, drink me, love me;
 Laura, make much of me:
 For your sake I have braved the glen
 And had to do with goblin merchant men.'

Laura started from her chair,
 Flung her arms up in the air,
 Clutched her hair:
 'Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
 For my sake the fruit forbidden?
 Must your light like mine be hidden,
 Your young life like mine be wasted,
 Undone in mine undoing
 And ruined in my ruin,
 Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?'—
 She clung about her sister,
 Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
 Tears once again
 Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
 Dropping like rain
 After long sultry drouth;
 Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
 She kissed and kissed her with a hungry
 mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
 That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
 She loathed the feast:
 Writhing as one possessed she leaped and
 sung,
 Rent all her robe, and wrung
 Her hands in lamentable haste,
 And beat her breast.
 Her beads streamed like the torch
 Borne by a racer at full speed,
 Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
 Or like an eagle when she stems the light

Straight toward the sun,
 Or like a caged thing freed,
 Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins,
 knocked at her heart,
 Met the fire smouldering there
 And overbore its lesser flame;
 She gorged on bitterness without a name:
 Ah! fool, to choose such part
 Of soul-consuming care!
 Sense failed in the mortal strife:
 Like the watch-tower of a town
 Which an earthquake shatters down,
 Like a lightning-stricken mast,
 Like a wind-uprooted tree
 Spun about,
 Like a foam-topped waterspout
 Cast down headlong in the sea,
 She fell at last;
 Pleasure past and anguish past,
 Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
 That night long Lizzie watched by her,
 Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
 Felt for her breath,
 Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
 With tears and fanning leaves:
 But when the first birds chirped about their
 eaves,
 And early reapers plodded to the place
 Of golden sheaves,
 And dew-wet grass
 Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to
 pass,
 And new buds with new day
 Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
 Laura awoke as from a dream,
 Laughed in the innocent old way,
 Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
 Her gleaming locks showed not one thread
 of grey,
 Her breath was sweet as May
 And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
 Afterwards, when both were wives
 With children of their own:
 Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
 Their lives bound up in tender lives;
 Laura would call the little ones
 And tell them of her early prime,
 Those pleasant days long gone
 Of not-returning time:
 Would talk about the haunted glen,
 The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
 Their fruits like honey to the throat
 But poisons in the blood;
 (Men sell not such in any town:)
 Would tell them how her sister stood
 In deadly peril to do her good,
 And win the fiery antidote:
 Then joining hands to little hands

Would bid them cling together,
 'For there is no friend like a sister
 In calm or stormy weather;
 To cheer one on the tedious way,
 To fetch one if one goes astray,
 To lift one if one totters down,
 To strengthen whilst 'one stands.'

VANITY OF VANITIES

[Published 1847. — Reprinted 1862.]

AH, woe is me for pleasure that is vain,
 Ah, woe is me for glory that is past:
 Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
 Glory that at the last bringeth no gain!
 So saith the sinking heart; and so again
 It shall say till the mighty angel-blast
 Is blown, making the sun and moon
 aghast
 And showering down the stars like sudden
 rain.
 And evermore men shall go fearfully
 Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;
 And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
 And strong men shall rise up in weariness;
 Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly
 Saying one to another: How vain it is!

DREAM LAND

[Published 1850. — Reprinted 1862.]

WHERE sunless rivers weep
 Their waves into the deep,
 She sleeps a charmed sleep:
 Awake her not.
 Led by a single star,
 She came from very far
 To seek where shadows are
 Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
 She left the fields of corn,
 For twilight cold and lorn
 And water springs.
 Through sleep, as through a veil,
 She sees the sky look pale,
 And hears the nightingale
 That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
 Shed over brow and breast;
 Her face is toward the west,
 The purple land.
 She cannot see the grain
 Ripening on hill and plain;
 She cannot feel the rain
 Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
 Upon a mossy shore;
 Rest, rest at the heart's core
 Till time shall cease;

Sleep that no pain shall wake,
 Night that no morn shall break
 Till joy shall overtake
 Her perfect peace.

UP-HILL

[Published 1861. — Reprinted 1862.]

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
 Yes, to the very end.
 Will the day's journey take the whole long
 day?
 From morn to night, my friend.
 But is there for the night a resting-place?
 A roof for when the slow dark hours
 begin.
 May not the darkness hide it from my
 face?
 You cannot miss that inn.
 Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
 Those who have gone before.
 Then must I knock, or call when just in
 sight?
 They will not keep you standing at that
 door.
 Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
 Of labour you shall find the sum.
 Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
 Yea, beds for all who come.

A BIRTHDAY

[Published 1861. — Reprinted 1862.]

My heart is like a singing bird
 Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
 My heart is like an apple-tree
 Whose boughs are bent with thickset
 fruit;
 My heart is like a rainbow shell
 That paddles in a halcyon sea;
 My heart is gladder than all these
 Because my love is come to me.
 Raise me a dais of silk and down;
 Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
 Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,
 And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
 Work it in gold and silver grapes,
 In leaves, and silver fleurs-de-lys;
 Because the birthday of my life
 Is come, my love is come to me.

REMEMBER

[1862.]

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;
 When you can no more hold me by the
 hand,
 Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
 Remember me when no more day by day

You tell me of our future that you
planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be
sad.

AFTER DEATH

[1862.]

THE curtains were half drawn, the floor
was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and
may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows
crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him
say:
'Poor child, poor child'; and as he turned
away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the
fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in
his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my
head:
He did not love me living; but once
dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am
cold.

MIRAGE

[1862.]

THE hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.
I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and
snapt
For a dream's sake.
Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self,
are changed
For a dream's sake.

SONG

[1862.]

WHEN I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:

Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

DEAD BEFORE DEATH

[1862.]

Ah! changed and cold, how changed and
very cold,
With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm
eyes:
Changed, yet the same; much knowing,
little wise;
This was the promise of the days of old!
Grown hard and stubborn in the ancient
mould,
Grown rigid in the sham of lifelong
lies:
We hoped for better things as years
would rise,
But it is over as a tale once told.
All fallen the blossom that no fruitage
bore,
All lost the present and the future time,
All lost, all lost, the lapse that went before:
So lost till death shut-to the opened door,
So lost from chime to everlasting chime,
So cold and lost for ever evermore.

REST

[1862.]

O EARTH, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching,
Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for
mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of
sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed
dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of
birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noon-day hold-
eth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shalt not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think
it long.

A BETTER RESURRECTION

[1862.]

I HAVE no wit, no words, no tears;
 My heart within me like a stone
 Is numbed too much for hopes or fears;
 Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
 I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
 No everlasting hills I see;
 My life is in the falling leaf:
 O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
 My harvest dwindled to a husk;
 Truly my life is void and brief
 And tedious in the barren dusk:
 My life is like a frozen thing,
 No bud nor greenness can I see:
 Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;
 O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
 A broken bowl that cannot hold
 One drop of water for my soul
 Or cordial in the searching cold;
 Cast in the fire the perished thing,
 Melt and remould it, till it be
 A royal cup for Him my King:
 O Jesus, drink of me.

ADVENT

[1862.]

THIS Advent moon shines cold and clear,
 These Advent nights are long;
 Our lamps have burned year after year
 And still their flame is strong.
 'Watchman, what of the night?' we cry,
 Heart-sick with hope deferred:
 'No speaking signs are in the sky,'
 Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
 The servants watch within;
 The watch is long betimes and late,
 The prize is slow to win.
 'Watchman, what of the night?' But still
 His answer sounds the same:
 'No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
 Nor pale our lamps of flame.'

One to another hear them speak
 The patient virgins wise:
 'Surely He is not far to seek'—
 'All night we watch and rise.'
 'The days are evil looking back,
 The coming days are dim;
 Yet count we not His promise slack,
 But watch and wait for Him.'

One with another, soul with soul,
 They kindle fire from fire:
 'Friends watch us who have touched the
 goal'
 'They urge us, come up higher.'

'With them shall rest our waysore feet,
 With them is built our home,
 With Christ.'—'They sweet, but He most
 sweet,
 Sweeter than honeycomb.'

There no more parting, no more pain,
 The distant ones brought near,
 The lost so long are found again,
 Long lost but longer dear:
 Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
 Nor heart conceived that rest,
 With them our good things long deferred,
 With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,
 We laugh for day shall rise,
 We sing a slow contented song
 And knock at Paradise.
 Weeping we hold Him fast, Who wept
 For us, we hold Him fast;
 And will not let Him go except
 He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
 We will not let Him go
 Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
 And summer smite the snow:
 Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
 Shall coo the livelong day;
 Then He shall say, 'Arise, My love,
 My fair one, come away.'

THE THREE ENEMIES

[1862.]

THE FLESH

'Sweet, thou art pale.' 'More pale to see
 Christ hung upon the cruel tree
 And bore His Father's wrath for me.'
 'Sweet, thou art sad.'

'Beneath a rod
 More heavy, Christ for my sake trod
 The winepress of the wrath of God.'

'Sweet, thou art weary.' 'Not so Christ:
 Whose mighty love of me sufficed
 For Strength, Salvation, Eucharist.'

'Sweet, thou art footsore.' 'If I bleed,
 His feet have bled: yea, in my need
 His Heart once bled for mine indeed.'

THE WORLD

'Sweet, thou art young.' 'So He was young
 Who for my sake in silence hung
 Upon the Cross with Passion wrung.'

'Look, thou art fair.' 'He was more fair
 Than men, Who digned for me to wear
 A visage marred beyond compare.'

'And thou hast riches.'

'Daily bread:
All else is His; Who living, dead,
For me lacked where to lay His Head.'

'And life is sweet.'

'It was not so
To Him, Whose Cup did overflow
With mine unutterable woe.'

THE DEVIL

'Thou drinkest deep.'

'When Christ would sup
He drained the dregs from out my cup:
So how should I be lifted up?'

'Thou shalt win Glory.'

'In the skies,
Lord Jesus, cover up mine eyes
Lest they should look on vanities.'

'Thou shalt have Knowledge.'

'Helpless dust!
In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust:
Answer Thou for me, Wise and Just.'

'And Might.'—

'Get thee behind me. Lord,
Who hast redeemed and not abhorred
My soul, oh keep it by Thy Word.'

THE WORLD

[1862.]

By day she woos me, soft, exceeding fair:
But all night as the moon so changeth
she;

Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she woos me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full
satiety:

But through the night, a beast she grins
at me,

A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie: by night she
stands

In all the naked horror of the truth
With pushing horns and clawed and clutch-
ing hands.

Is this a friend indeed; that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and
youth,

Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?

PASSING AWAY, SAITH THE WORLD

[1862.]

PASSING away, saith the World, passing
away:

Chances, beauty and youth sapped day by
day:

Thy life never continueth in one stay.

Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair
changing to grey

That hath won neither laurel nor bay?
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in
May:

Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy
decay

On my bosom for aye.

Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:
With its burden of fear and hope, of
labour and play;

Hearken what the past doth witness and
say:

Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must
decay.

At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one
certain day

Lo, the Bridegroom shall come and shall
not delay:

Watch thou and pray.

Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:
Winter passeth after the long delay:

New grapes on the vine, new figs on the
tender spray,

Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.

Though I tarry wait for me, trust Me,
watch and pray.

Arise, come away, night is past and lo it
is day,

My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt
hear Me say.

Then I answered: Yea.

A PORTRAIT

[1866.]

SHE gave up beauty in her tender youth,
Gave all her hope and joy and pleasant
ways;

She covered up her eyes lest they should
gaze

On vanity, and chose the bitter truth.

Harsh towards herself, towards others full
of ruth,

Servant of servants, little known to
praise,

Long prayers and fasts trenched on her
nights and days:

She schooled herself to sights and sounds
uncouth

That with the poor and stricken she might
make

A home, until the least of all sufficed
Her wants; her own self learned she to
forsake,

Counting all earthly gain but hurt and loss.

So with calm will she chose and bore the
cross

And hated all for love of Jesus Christ.

II

They knelt in silent anguish by her bed,
And could not weep; but calmly there
she lay.

All pain had left her; and the sun's
last ray

Shone through upon her, warming into red
The shady curtains. In her heart she said:
'Heaven opens; I leave these and go
away;

The Bridegroom calls, — shall the Bride
seek to stay?'

Then low upon her breast she bowed her
head.

O lily flower, O gem of priceless worth,
O dove with patient voice and patient
eyes,

O fruitful vine amid a land of dearth,
O maid replete with loving purities,
Thou bowedst down thy head with friends
on earth

To raise it with the saints in Paradise.

TWICE

[1866.]

I took my heart in my hand
(O my love, O my love),

I said: Let me fall or stand,
Let me live or die,

But this once hear me speak —
(O my love, O my love) —

Yet a woman's words are weak;
You should speak, not I.

You took my heart in your hand
With a friendly smile,

With a critical eye you scanned,
Then set it down,

And said: It is still unripe,
Better wait awhile;

Wait while the skylarks pipe,
Till the corn grows brown.

As you set it down it broke —
Broke, but I did not wince;

I smiled at the speech you spoke,
At your judgment that I heard:

But I have not often smiled
Since then, nor questioned since,
Nor cared for corn-flowers wild,
— Nor sung with the singing bird.

I take my heart in my hand,
O my God, O my God,

My broken heart in my hand:
Thou hast seen, judge Thou.

My hope was written on sand,
O my God, O my God:

Now let Thy judgment stand —
Yea, judge me now.

This contemned of a man,
This marred one heedless day,
This heart take Thou to scan
Both within and without:
Refine with fire its gold,
Purge Thou its dross away —
Yea, hold it in Thy hold,
Whence none can pluck it out.

I take my heart in my hand —
I shall not die, but live —
Before Thy face I stand;
I, for Thou callest such:
All that I have I bring,
All that I am I give,
Smile Thou and I shall sing,
But shall not question much.

L. E. L.

[1866.]

'Whose heart was breaking for a little love.'

DOWNSTAIRS I laugh, I sport and jest with
all:

But in my solitary room above

I turn my face in silence to the wall;
My heart is breaking for a little love.

Though winter frosts are done,
And birds pair every one,

And leaves peep out, for springtide is
begun.

I feel no spring, while spring is wellnigh
blown,

I find no nest, while nests are in the
grove:

Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells
alone,

My heart that breaketh for a little love.
While golden in the sun

Rivulets rise and run,

While lilies bud, for springtide is begun.

All love, are loved, save only I; their
hearts

Beat warm with love and joy, beat full
thereof:

They cannot guess, who play the pleasant
parts,

My heart is breaking for a little love.

While beehives wake and whirr,

And rabbit thins his fur,

In living spring that sets the world astir.

I deck myself with silks and jewelry,
I plume myself like any mated dove:

They praise my rustling show, and never
see

My heart is breaking for a little love.

While sprouts green lavender

With rosemary and myrrh,

For in quick spring the sap is all astir.

Perhaps some saints in glory guess the
truth,
Perhaps some angels read it as they
move,

And cry one to another full of ruth,
'Her heart is breaking for a little love.'
Though other things have birth,
And leap and sing for mirth,
When springtime wakes and clothes and
feeds the earth.

Yet saith a saint: 'Take patience for thy
scathe;'

Yet saith an angel: 'Wait, for thou shalt
prove
True best is last, true life is born of death,
O thou, heart-broken for a little love.
Then love shall fill thy girth,
And love make fat thy dearth,
When new spring builds new heaven and
clean new earth.'

SOMEWHERE OR OTHER

[1866.]

SOMEWHERE or other there must surely be
The face not seen, the voice not heard,
The heart that not yet—never yet—ah me!
Made answer to my word.

Somewhere or other, may be near or far;
Past land and sea, clean out of sight;
Beyond the wandering moon, beyond the
star
That tracks her night by night.

Somewhere or other, may be far or near;
With just a wall, a hedge, between;
With just the last leaves of the dying year
Fallen on a turf grown green.

WEARY IN WELL-DOING

[1866.]

I WOULD have gone; God bade me stay:
I would have worked; God bade me rest.
He broke my will from day to day,
He read my yearnings unexpressed
And said them nay.

Now I would stay; God bids me go:
Now I would rest; God bids me work.
He breaks my heart tossed to and fro,
My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk
And vex it so.

I go, Lord, where Thou sendest me;
Day after day I plod and moil:
But, Christ my God, when will it be
That I may let alone my toil
And rest with Thee?

PARADISE: IN A DREAM

[Published in *Lyra Messianica*, second edition,
1865.]

ONCE in a dream I saw the flowers
That bud and bloom in Paradise;
More fair they are than waking eyes
Have seen in all this world of ours.
And faint the perfume-bearing rose,
And faint the lily on its stem,
And faint the perfect violet
Compared with them.

I heard the songs of Paradise:
Each bird sat singing in his place;
A tender song so full of grace
It soared like incense to the skies.
Each bird sat singing to his mate
Soft cooing notes among the trees:
The nightingale herself were cold
To such as these.

I saw the fourfold River flow,
And deep it was, with golden sand;
It flowed between a mossy land
Which murmured music grave and low.
It hath refreshment for all thirst,
For fainting spirits strength and rest:
Earth holds not such a draught as this
From east to west.

The Tree of Life stood budding there,
Abundant with its twelvefold fruits;
Eternal sap sustains its roots,
Its shadowing branches fill the air.
Its leaves are healing for the world,
Its fruit the hungry world can feed.
Sweeter than honey to the taste
And balm indeed.

I saw the gate called Beautiful;
And looked, but scarce could look,
within;
I saw the golden streets begin,
And outskirts of the glassy pool.
Oh harps, oh crowns of plenteous stars,
Oh green palm-branches many-leaved—
Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
Nor heart conceived.

I hope to see these things again,
But not as once in dreams by night;
To see them with my very sight,
And touch, and handle, and attain:
To have all Heaven beneath my feet
For narrow way that once they trod;
To have my part with all the Saints,
And with my God.

AMOR MUNDI

[Published in *The Shilling Magazine*, 1865.]

'OH, where are you going with your love-
locks flowing,
On the west wind blowing along this
valley track?'

'The downhill path is easy, come with me
an' it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turn-
ing back.'

So they two went together in glowing Au-
gust weather,
The honey-breathing heather lay to their
left and right;
And dear she was to doat on, her swift
feet seemed to float on
The air like soft twin pigeons too
sportive to alight.

'Oh, what is that in heaven where grey
cloudflakes are seven,
Where, blackest clouds hang riven just at
the rainy skirt?'
'Oh, that 's a meteor sent us, a message
dumb, portentous, —
An undecipher'd solemn signal of help or
hurt.'

'Oh, what is that glides quickly where vel-
vet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?' — 'A
scaled and hooded worm.'
'Oh, what 's that in the hollow, so pale I
quake to follow?'
'Oh, that 's a thin dead body which waits
th' eternal term.'

'Turn again, O my sweetest, — turn again,
false and fleetest:
This way whereof thou weetest I fear is
hell's own track.'
'Nay, too steep for hill-mounting, — nay,
too late for cost counting:
This downhill path is easy, but there 's no
turning back.'

THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY

[Published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1869.]

I WOULD not if I could undo my past,
Tho' for its sake my future is a blank;
My past, for which I have myself to
thank
For all its faults and follies first and last.
I would not cast anew the lot once cast,
Or launch a second ship for one that
sank,
Or drug with sweets the bitterness I
drank,

Or break by feasting my perpetual fast.
I would not if I could: for much more
dear

Is one remembrance than a hundred joys,
More than a thousand hopes in jubilee;
Dearer the music of one tearful voice
That unforbidden calls and calls to me,
'Follow me here, rise up, and follow here.'

What seekest thou far in the unknown
land?

In hope I follow joy gone on before,
In hope and fear persistent more and
more,

As the dry desert lengthens out its sand.
Whilst day and night I carry in my hand
The golden key to ope the golden door
Of golden home; yet mine eye weepeth
sore

For the long journey that must make no
stand.

And who is this that veiled doth walk
with thee?

Lo, this is Love that walketh at my
right;

One exile holds us both, and we are
bound

To selfsame home-joys in the land of
light.

Weeping thou walkest with him; weepeth
he? —

Some sobbing weep, some weep and
make no sound

A dimness of a glory glimmers here
Thro' veils and distance from the space
remote,

A faintest far vibration of a note
Reaches to us and seems to bring us near,
Causing our face to glow with braver
cheer,

Making the serried mist to stand afloat,
Subduing languor with an antidote,
And strengthening love almost to cast out
fear,

Till for one moment golden city walls
Rise looming on us, golden walls of
home,

Light of our eyes until the darkness falls;
Then thro' the outer darkness burden-
some

I hear again the tender voice that calls,
'Follow me hither, follow, rise, and come.'

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

(1828-1882)

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL¹

[Composed 1847. — Published 1850.]

THE blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
... Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face. ...
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the world. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come,' she said.
'Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

'We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

¹ The order of the poems is that of the *Collected Works*, 1886, except that the *King's Tragedy* has been placed last. The dates are from W. M. Rossetti's chronology, prefixed to the edition of 1911.

'And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know.'

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

'We two,' she said, 'will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

'Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robcs for them
Who are just born, being dead.

'He shall fear, haply, and be dumb;
Then will I lay my cheek -
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

'There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.'

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
'All this is when he comes.' She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
, Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

LOVE'S NOCTURN

[Composed 1854. — Published 1870.]

MASTER of the murmuring courts
Where the shapes of sleep convene!—
Lo! my spirit here exhorts
All the powers of thy demesne
For their aid to woo my queen.

What reports
Yield thy jealous courts unseen?
Vaporous, unaccountable, *both lateri.*
Dreamland lies forlorn of light, *all other*
Hollow like a breathing shell. *notion-*
Ah! that from all dreams I might *seem.*
Choose one dream and guide its flight!

I know well
What her sleep should tell to-night.
There the dreams are multitudes:
Some that will not wait for sleep,
Deep within the August woods;
Some that hum while rest may steep
Weary labor laid a-heap;
Interludes,
Some, of grievous moods that weep.

Poet's fancies all are there;
There the elf-girls flood with wings
Valleys full of plaintive air;
There breathe perfumes; there in rings
Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;
Siren there
Winds her dizzy hair and sings.

Thence the one dream mutually
Dreamed in bridal unison,
Less than walking ecstasy;
Half-formed visions that make moan
In the house-of birth alone;
And what we
At death's wicket see, unknown.

But for mine own 'sleep, it lies
In one gracious form's control,
Fair with honorable eyes,
Lamps of a translucent soul:
O their glance is loftiest dole,
Sweet and wise,
Wherein Love descries his goal.

Reft of her, my dreams are all
Clammy: trance that fears the sky:
Changing footpaths shift and fall;
From polluted coverts nigh,
Miserable phantoms sigh;
Quakes the pall,
And the funeral goes by.

Master, is it soothly said
That, as echoes of man's speech
Far in secret clefts are made,
So do all men's bodies reach
Shadows o'er thy sunken beach,—
Shape or shade
In those halls portrayed of each?

Ah! might I, by thy good grace
 Groping in the windy stair,
 (Darkness and the breath of space
 Like loud waters everywhere),
 Meeting mine own image there
 Face to face,
 Send it from that place to her!

Nay, not I; but oh! do thou,
 Master, from thy shadow kind
 Call my body's phantom now:
 Bid it bear its face declin'd
 Till its flight her slumbers find,
 And her brow
 Feel its presence bow like wind.

Where in groves the gracile Spring
 Trembles, with mute orison
 Confidently strengthening,
 Water's voice and wind's as one
 Shed an echo in the sun.
 Soft as Spring,
 Master, bid it sing and moan.

Song shall tell how glad and strong
 Is the night she soothes away;
 Moan shall grieve with that parched tongue
 Of the brazen hours of day:
 Sounds as of the springtide they,
 Moan and song,
 While the chill months long for May.

Not the prayers which with all leave
 The world's fluent woes prefer,—
 Not the praise the world doth give,
 Dulcet fulsome whisperer;—
 Let it yield my love to her,
 And achieve
 Strength that shall not grieve or err.

Wheresoe'er my dreams befall,
 Both at night-watch (let it say),
 And where round the sun-dial
 The reluctant hours of day,
 Heartless, hopeless of their way,
 Rest and call;—
 There her glance doth fall and stay.

Suddenly her face is there:
 So do mounting vapors wreath
 Subtle-scented transports where
 The black fir-wood sets its teeth,
 Part the boughs and looks beneath,—
 Lilies share
 Secret waters there, and breathe.

Master, bid my shadow bend
 Whispering thus till birth of light,
 Lest new shapes that sleep may send
 Scatter all its work to flight;—
 Master, master of the night,
 Bid it spend
 Speech, song, prayer, and end aright.

Yet, ah me! if at her head
 There another phantom lean
 Murmuring o'er the fragrant bed,—
 Ah! and if my spirit's queen
 Smile those alien words between,—
 Ah! poor shade!
 Shall it strive, or fade unseen?

How should love's own messenger
 Strive with love and be love's foe?
 Master, nay! If thus, in her,
 Sleep a wedded heart should show,—
 Silent let mine image go,
 Its old share
 Of thy spell-bound air to know.

Like a vapor wan and mute, *monosyllabic*
 Like a flame, so let it pass; *revel, yet*
 One low sigh across her lute, *musical &*
 One dull breath against her glass; *not*
 And to my sad soul, alas! *monotonous.*
 One salute
 Cold as when death's foot shall pass.

Then, too, let all hopes of mine,
 All vain hopes by night and day,
 Slowly at thy summoning sign
 Rise up pallid and obey.
 Dreams, if this is thus, were they:—
 Be they thine,
 And to dreamworld pine away.

Yet from old time, life, not death,
 Master, in thy rule is rife:
 Lo! through thee, with mingling breath,
 Adam woke beside his wife.
 O Love bring me so, for strife,
 Force and faith,
 Bring me so not death but life!

Yea, to Love himself is pour'd
 This frail song of hope and fear.
 Thou art Love, of one accord
 With kind Sleep to bring her near,
 Still-eyed, deep-eyed, ah how dear!
 Master, Lord,
 In her name implor'd, O hear!

TROY TOWN

[Composed 1869. — Published 1870.]

HEAVENBORN Helen, Sparta's queen,
 (O Troy Town!)
 Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
 The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
 All Love's lordship lay between.
 (O Troy's down,
 Tall Troy's on fire!)

Helen knelt at Venus' shrine,
 (O Troy Town!)
 Saying, 'A little gift is mine,
 A little gift for a heart's desire.
 Hear me speak and make me a sign!
 (O Troy's down,
 Tall Troy's on fire!)

'Look, I bring thee a carven cup;
(O Troy Town!)
 See it here as I hold it up,—
 Shaped it is to the heart's desire,
 Fit to fill when the gods would sup.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

'It was moulded like my breast;
(O Troy Town!)
 He that sees it may not rest,
 Rest at all for his heart's desire.
 O give ear to my heart's behest!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

'See my breast, how like it is;
(O Troy Town!)
 See it bare for the air to kiss!
 Is the cup to thy heart's desire?
 O for the breast, O make it his!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

'Yea, for my bosom here I sue;
(O Troy Town!)
 Thou must give it where 'tis due,
 Give it there to the heart's desire.
 Whom do I give my bosom to?
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

'Each twin breast is an apple sweet!
(O Troy Town!)
 Once an apple stirred the beat
 Of thy heart with the heart's desire:—
 Say, who brought it then to thy feet?
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

'They that claimed it then were three
(O Troy Town!)
 For thy sake two hearts did he
 Make forlorn of the heart's desire.
 Do for him as he did for thee!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

'Mine are apples grown to the south,
(O Troy Town!)
 Grown to taste in the days of drouth,
 Taste and waste to the heart's desire;
 Mine are apples meet for his mouth!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked on Helen's gift,
(O Troy Town!)
 Looked and smiled with subtle drift,
 Saw the work of her heart's desire:—
 'There thou kneel'st for Love to lift!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked on Helen's face,
(O Troy Town!)
 Knew far off an hour and place,
 And fire lit from the heart's desire;
 Laughed and said, 'Thy gift hath grace!'
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid looked on Helen's breast,
(O Troy Town!)
 Saw the heart within its nest,
 Saw the flame of the heart's desire,—
 Marked his arrow's burning crest.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid took another dart,
(O Troy Town!)
 Fledged it for another heart,
 Winged the shaft with the heart's desire,
 Drew the string and said, 'Depart!'
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Paris turned upon his bed,
(O Troy Town!)
 Turned upon his bed and said,
 Dead at heart with the heart's desire,—
 'O to clasp her golden head!'
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH

[Composed 1850 and later. — Published 1856.]

IN our Museum galleries
 To-day I lingered o'er the prize
 Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—
 Her Art for ever in fresh wise
 From hour to hour rejoicing me.
 Sighing I turned at last to win
 Once more the London dirt and din;
 And as I made the swing-door spin
 And issued, they were hoisting in
 A winged beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,
 And hoofs behind and hoofs before,
 And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er
 'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,
 'A dead disbowelled mystery;
 The mummy of a buried faith
 Stark from the charnel without scathe,
 Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—
 Such fossil cerements as might swathe
 The very corpse of Nineveh.

The print of its first rush-wrapping,
 Wound ere it dried, still ribbed the thing.
 What song did the brown maidens sing,
 From purple mouths alternating,
 When that was woven languidly?

What vows, what rites, what prayers preferred

What songs has the strange image heard?
In what blind vigil stood interr'd
For ages, till an English word
Broke silence first at Nineveh?

Oh when upon each sculptured court,
Where even the wind might not resort,—
O'er which Time passed, of like import
With the wild Arab boys at sport,—

A living face looked in to see:—
Oh seemed it not—the spell once broke—
As though the carven warriors woke,
As though the shaft the string forsook,
The cymbals clashed, the chariots shook,
And there was life in Nineveh?

On London stones our sun anew
The beast's recovered shadow threw.
(No shade that plague of darkness knew,
No light, no shade, while older grew
By ages the old earth and sea.)

Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown
Such proof to make thy godhead known?
From their dead Past thou liv'st alone;
And still thy shadow is thine own
Even as of yore in Nineveh.

That day whereof we keep record,
When near thy city-gates the Lord
Sheltered his Jonah with a gourd,
This sun, (I said) here present, pour'd
Even thus this shadow that I see.

This shadow has been shed the same
From sun and moon,—from lamps which
came

For prayer,—from fifteen days of flame,
The last, while smouldered to a name
Sardanapalus' Nineveh.

Within thy shadow, haply, once
Sennacherib has knelt, whose sons
Smote him between the altar-stones:
Or pale Semiramis her zones

Of gold, her incense brought to thee,
In love for grace, in war for aid: . . .
Ay, and who else? . . . till 'neath thy shade
Within his trenches newly made
Last year the Christian knelt and pray'd—
Not to thy strength—in Nineveh.*

Now, thou poor god, within this hall
Where the blank windows blind the wall
From pedestal to pedestal,
The kind of light shall on thee fall

Which London takes the day to be:
While school-foundations in the act
Of holiday, three files compact,
Shall learn to view thee as a fact
Connected with that zealous tract:
'Rome,—Babylon and Nineveh.'

* During the excavations, Tiyari workmen held their services in the shadow of the great bulls (Layard's *Nineveh*, ch. ix).

Deemed they of this, those worshippers,
When, in some mythic chain of verse
Which man shall not again rehearse,
The faces of thy ministers

Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?
Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god
Before whose feet men knelt unshod
Deem that in this unblest abode
Another scarce more unknown god
Should house with him, from Nineveh?

Ah! in what quarries lay the stone
From which this pygmy pile has grown,
Unto man's need how long unknown,
Since thy vast temples, court and cone,
Rose far in desert history?

Ah! what is here that does not lie
All strange to thine awakened eye?
Ah! what is here can testify
(Save that dumb presence of the sky)
Unto thy day and Nineveh?

Why, of those mummies in the room
Above, there might indeed have come
One out of Egypt to thy home,
An alien. Nay, but were not some

Of these thine own 'antiquity'?
And now,—they and their gods and thou
All relics here together,—now
Whose profit? whether bull or cow,
Isis or Ibis, who or how,
Whether of Thebes or Nineveh?

The consecrated metals found,
And ivory tablets, underground,
Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd
When air and daylight filled the mound,
Fell into dust immediately.

And even as these, the images
Of awe and worship,—even as these,—
So, smitten with the sun's increase,
Her glory mouldered and did cease
From immemorial Nineveh.

The day her builders made their halt,
Those cities of the lake of salt
Stood firmly 'stablished without fault,
Made proud with pillars of basalt,
With sardonx and porphyry.
The day that Jonah bore abroad
To Nineveh the voice of God,
A brackish lake lay in his road,
Where erst Pride fixed her sure abode,
As then in royal Nineveh.

The day when he, Pride's lord and Man's,
Showed all the kingdoms at a glance
To Him before whose countenance
The years recede, the years advance,

And said, Fall down and worship me:—
'Mid all the pomp beneath that look,
Then stirred there, haply, some rebuke,
Where to the wind the salt pools shook,
And in those tracts, of life forsook,
That knew thee not, O Nineveh!

Delicate harlot! On thy throne
 Thou with a world beneath thee prone
 In state for ages sat'st alone;
 And needs were years and lustres flown
 Ere strength of man could vanquish thee:
 Whom even thy victor foes must bring,
 Still royal, among maids that sing
 As with doves' voices, taboring
 Upon their breasts, unto the King, —
 A kingly conquest, Nineveh!

. . . Here woke my thought. The wind's
 slow sway
 Had waxed; and like the human play
 Of scorn that smiling spreads away,
 The sunshine shivered off the day:
 The callous wind, it seemed to me,
 Swept up the shadow from the ground:
 And pale as whom the Fates astound,
 The god forlorn stood winged and crown'd:
 Within I knew the cry lay bound
 Of the dumb soul of Nineveh.

And as I turned, my sense half shut
 Still saw the crowds of kerb and rut
 Go past as marshalled to the strut
 Of ranks in gypsum quaintly cut.
 It seemed in one same pageantry
 They followed forms which had been erst;
 To pass, till on my sight should burst
 That future of the best or worst
 When some may question which was first,
 Of London or of Nineveh.

For as that Bull-god once did stand
 And watched the burial-clouds of sand,
 Till these at last without a hand
 Rose o'er his eyes, another land,
 And blinded him with destiny: —
 So may he stand again; till now,
 In ships of unknown sail and prow,
 Some tribe of the Australian plough
 Bear him afar, — a relic now
 Of London, not of Nineveh!

Or it may chance indeed that when
 Man's age is hoary among men, —
 His centuries threescore and ten, —
 His furthest childhood shall seem then
 More clear than later times may be:
 Who, finding in this desert place
 This form, shall hold us for some race
 That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,
 But bowed its pride and vowed its praise
 Unto the god of Nineveh.

The smile rose first — anon drew nigh
 The thought: . . . Those heavy wings
 spread high
 So sure of flight, which do not fly;
 That set gaze never on the sky;
 Those scripted flanks it cannot see.

Its crown, a brow-contracting load;
 Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .
 (So grew the image as I trod:)
 O Nineveh, was this thy God, —
 Thine also, mighty Nineveh?

THE PORTRAIT

[Composed 1847-70. — Published 1870.]

THIS is her picture as she was:
 It seems a thing to wonder on,
 As though mine image in the glass
 Should tarry when myself am gone.
 I gaze until she seems to stir, —
 Until mine eyes almost aver
 That now, even now, the sweet lips part
 To breathe the words of the sweet heart:
 And yet the earth is over her.

Alas! even such the thin-drawn ray
 That makes the prison-depths more
 rude, —
 The drip of water night and day
 Giving a tongue to solitude.
 Yet only this, of love's whole prize,
 Remains; save what in mournful guise
 Takes counsel with my soul alone, —
 Save what is secret and unknown,
 Below the earth, above the skies.

In painting her I shrined her face
 'Mid mystic trees, where light falls in
 Hardly at all; a covert place
 Where you might think to find a din
 Of doubtful talk, and a live flame
 Wandering, and many a shape whose name
 Not itself knoweth, and old dew,
 And your own footsteps meeting you,
 And all things going as they came.

A deep dim wood; and there she stands
 As in that wood that day: for so
 Was the still movement of her hands
 And such the pure line's gracious flow.
 And passing fair the type must seem,
 Unknown the presence and the dream.
 'Tis she: though of herself, alas!
 Less than her shadow on the grass
 Or than her image in the stream.

That day we met there, I and she
 One with the other all alone;
 And we were blithe; yet memory
 Saddens those hours, as when the moon
 Looks upon daylight. And with her
 I stooped to drink the spring-water,
 Athirst where other waters sprang;
 And where the echo is, she sang,
 My soul another echo there.

But when that hour my soul won strength
 For words whose silence wastes and kills,
 Dull raindrops smote us, and at length
 Thundered the heat within the hills.

That eve I spoke those words again
Beside the pelted window-pane;
And there she hearkened what I said,
With under-glances that surveyed
The empty pastures blind with rain.

Next day the memories of these things,
Like leaves through which a bird has
flown,
Still vibrated with Love's warm wings;
Till I must make them all my own
And paint this picture. So, 'twixt ease
Of talk and sweet long silences,
She stood among the plants in bloom
At windows of a summer room,
To feign the shadow of the trees.

And as I wrought, while all above
And all around was fragrant air,
In the sick burthen of my love
It seemed each sun-thrilled blossom there
Beat like a heart among the leaves.
O heart that never beats nor heaves,
In that one darkness lying still,
What now to thee my love's great will
Or the fine web the sunshine weaves?

For now doth daylight disavow
Those days,—nought left to see or
hear.

Only in solemn whispers now
At night-time these things reach mine ear,
When the leaf-shadows at a breath
Shrink in the road, and all the heath,
Forest and water, far and wide,
In limpid starlight glorified,
Lie like the mystery of death.

Last night at last I could have slept,
And yet delayed my sleep till dawn,
Still wandering. Then it was I wept:
For unawares I came upon
Those glades where once she walked with
me:

And as I stood there suddenly,
All wan with traversing the night,
Upon the desolate verge of light
Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea.

Even so, where Heaven holds breath and
hears

The beating heart of Love's own breast—
Where round the secret of all spheres
All angels lay their wings to rest,—
How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,
When, by the new birth borne abroad
Throughout the music of the suns,
It enters in her soul at once
And knows the silence there for God!

Here with her face doth memory sit
Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
Till other eyes shall look from it,
Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,

Even than the old gaze tenderer:
While hopes and aims long lost with her
Stand round her image side by side,
Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
About the Holy Sepulchre.

SISTER HELEN

[Composed 1851. — Published 1854. — Revised 1880.]

'WHY did you melt your waxen man,
Sister Helen?

To-day is the third since you began.'

'The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother.'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'But if you have done your work aright,
Sister Helen,

You'll let me play, for you said I might.'

'Be very still in your play to-night,
Little brother.'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Third night, to-night, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
Sister Helen;

If now it be molten, all is well.'

'Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
Little brother.'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;

How like dead folk he has dropped away!'

'Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What of the dead, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'See, see, the sunken pile of wood,

Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as
blood!'

'Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
Little brother?'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
How pale she is, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'Now close your eyes, for they're sick and
sore,

Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door.'

'Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
Little brother.'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What rest to-night between Hell and
Heaven?)

'Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me.'
'Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sight to-night, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
 Sister Helen;
 In the shaken trees the chill stars shake.'
 'Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you
 spake,
 Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sound to-night, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly.'
'Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Whence should they come, between Hell
and Heaven?)

‘They come by the hill-verge from Boyne
Bar,
Sister Helen,
And one draws nigh, but two are afar.’
‘Look, look, do you know them who they
are,
Little brother?’
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Who should they be, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white mane on the blast.'
'The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Her hour at last, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'He has made a sign and called Halloo!
Sister Helen,
And he says that he would speak with you.'
'Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,
Sister Helen,
That Keith of Ewern's like to die.'
'And he and thou, and thou and I,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
And they and we, between Hell and
Heaven!)

Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,
 Sister Helen,
 He sickened, and lies since then forlorn.
 'For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,
 Little brother?'
 (O Mother, Mary Mother,
 Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and
 Heaven!)

‘Three days and nights he has lain abed,
Sister Helen,
And he prays in torment to be dead.’
‘The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
Little brother!’
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
If he have prayed, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away.'
'My prayer was heard,—he need not pray,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Shall God not hear, between Hell and
Heaven?)

‘But he says, till you take back your ban,
Sister Helen,
His soul would pass, yet never can.’
‘Nay then, shall I slay a living man,
Little brother?’
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

'But he calls for ever on your name,
Sister Helen,
And says that he melts before a flame.'
'My heart for his pleasure fared the same,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white plume on the blast.'
'The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,
Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,
Sister Helen;
But his words are drowned in the wind's
course.'
'Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear per-
force,
Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What word now heard, between Hell and
Heaven?)

'Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die.'

'In all that his soul sees, there am I,
Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The soul's one sight, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'He sends a ring and a broken coin,
Sister Helen,
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne.'
'What else he broke will he ever join,
Little brother?'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
No, never joined, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'He yields you these and craves full fain,
Sister Helen,
You pardon him in his mortal pain.'
'What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Not twice to give, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'He calls your name in an agony,
Sister Helen,
That even dead Love must weep to see.'
'Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Love turned to hate, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white hair on the blast.'
'The short, short hour will soon be past,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Will soon be past, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'He looks at me and he tries to speak,
Sister Helen,
But oh! his voice is sad and weak!
'What here should the mighty Baron seek,
Little brother?'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies, but the soul shall live.'
'Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
As she forgives, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen,
To save his dear son's soul alive.'
'Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,

Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He cries to you, kneeling in the road,
Sister Helen,
To go with him for the love of God!'
'The way is long to his son's abode,
Little brother.'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The way is long, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,
Sister Helen,
So darkly clad, I saw her not.'
'See her now or never see aught,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What more to see, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'Her hood falls back, and the moon shines
fair,

Sister Helen,
On the lady of Ewern's golden hair.'
'Blest hour of my power and her despair,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Hour blest and bann'd, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did
glow,

Sister Helen,
'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago.'
'One morn for pride and three days for
woe,

Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days, three nights, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'Her clasped hands stretch from her bend-
ing head,

Sister Helen;
With the loud wind's wail her sobs are
wed.'

'What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,
Little brother?'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What strain but death's between Hell and
Heaven?)

'She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,
Sister Helen, —

'She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon.'
'Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe
tune,

Little brother!
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and
Heaven!)

'They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,

Sister Helen,
And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow.'

'Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)

'O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen!

More loud than the vesper-chime it fell.
'No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,

Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,
Sister Helen;

Is it in the sky or in the ground?
'Say, have they turned their horses round,

Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?)

'They have raised the old man from his knee,

Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily.'

'More fast the naked soul doth flee,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,
Sister Helen,

But the lady's dark steed goes alone.
'And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath

flown,
Little brother.'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
Sister Helen,

And weary sad they look by the hill.
'But he and I are sadder still,

Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,

Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

'See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,

Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!

'Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,

Sister Helen,
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?'

'A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

STRATTON WATER

[Composed 1854-69. — Published 1870.]

'O HAVE you seen the Stratton flood
That's great with rain to-day?

It runs beneath your wall, Lord Sands,
Full of the new-mown hay.

'I led your hounds to Hutton bank
To bathe at early morn:

They got their bath by Borrowbrake
Above the standing corn.'

Out from the castle-stair Lord Sands
Looked up the western lea;

The rook was grieving on her nest,
The flood was round her tree.

Over the castle-wall Lord Sands
Looked down the eastern hill:

The stakes swam free among the boats,
The flood was rising still.

'What's yonder far below that lies
So white against the slope?'

'O it's a sail o' your bonny barks
The waters have washed up.'

'But I have never a sail so white,
And the water's not yet there.'

'O it's the swans o' your bonny lake
The rising flood doth scare.'

'The swans they would not hold so still,
So high they would not win.'

'O it's Joyce my wife has spread her smock
And fears to fetch it in.'

'Nay, knave, it's neither sail nor swans,
Nor aught that you can say;

For though your wife might leave her smock,
Herself she'd bring away.'

Lord Sands had passed the turret-stair,
The court, and yard, and all;

The kine were in the byre that day,
The nags were in the stall.

Lord Sands has won the sweltering slope
Whereon the white shape lay:

The clouds were still above the hill,
And the shape was still as they.

Oh pleasant is the gaze of life
And sad is death's blind head;
But awful are the living eyes
In the face of one thought dead!

'In God's name, Janet, is it me
Thy ghost has come to seek?'
'Nay, wait another hour, Lord Sands, —
Be sure my ghost shall speak.'

A moment stood he as a stone,
Then grovelled to his knee.
'O Janet, O my love, my love,
Rise up and come with me!'
'O once before you bade me come,
And it's here you have brought me!

'O many's the sweet word, Lord Sands,
You've spoken oft to me;
But all that I have from you to-day
Is the rain on my body.

'And many's the good gift, Lord Sands,
You've promised oft to me;
But the gift of yours I keep to-day
Is the babe in my body.

'O it's not in any earthly bed
That first my babe I'll see;
For I have brought my body here
That the flood may cover me.'

His face was close against her face,
His hands of hers were fain:
O her wet cheeks were hot with tears,
Her wet hands cold with rain.

'They told me you were dead, Janet, —
How could I guess the lie?'
'They told me you were false, Lord Sands,
What could I do but die?'

'Now keep you well, my brother Giles,
Through you I deemed her dead!
As wan as your towers be to-day,
To-morrow they'll be red.'

'Look down, look down, my false mother,
That bade me not to grieve:
You'll look up when our marriage fires
Are lit to-morrow eve.

'O more than one and more than two
The sorrow of this shall see:
But it's to-morrow, love, for them, —
To-day's for thee and me.'

He's drawn her face between his hands
And her pale mouth to his:
No bird that was so still that day
Chirps sweeter than his kiss.

The flood was creeping round their feet.
'O Janet, come away!
The hall is warm for the marriage-rite,
The bed for the birthday.'

'Nay, but I hear your mother cry,
"Go bring this bride to bed!
And would she christen her babe unborn,
So wet she comes to wed?"

'I'll be your wife to cross your door
And meet your mother's e'e.
We plighted troth to wed i' the kirk,
And it's there I'll wed with ye.'

He's ta'en her by the short girdle
And by the dripping sleeve:
'Go fetch Sir Jock my mother's priest, —
You'll ask of him no leave.

'O it's one half-hour to reach the kirk
And one for the marriage rite;
And kirk and castle and castle-lands
Shall be our babe's to-night.'

'The flood's in the kirkyard, Lord Sands,
And round the bellry-stair,'
'I bade ye fetch the priest,' he said,
'Myself shall bring him there.'

'It's for the lilt of wedding bells
We'll have the hail to pour,
And for the clink of bridle-reins
The plashing of the oar.'

Beneath them on the nether hill
A boat was floating wide:
Lord Sands swam out and caught the oars
And rowed to the hill-side.

He's wrapped her in a green mantle
And set her softly in;
Her hair was wet upon her face,
Her face was gray and thin;
And 'Oh!' she said, 'lie still, my babe,
It's out you must not win!'

But woe's my heart for Father John!
As hard as he might pray,
There seemed no help but Noah's ark
Or Jonah's fish that day.

The first strokes that the oars struck
Were over the broad leas;
The next strokes that the oars struck
They pushed beneath the trees;

The last stroke that the oars struck,
The good boat's head was met,
And there the gate of the kirkyard
Stood like a ferry-gate.

He's set his hand upon the bar
And lightly leaped within:
He's lifted her to his left shoulder,
Her knees beside his chin.

The graves lay deep beneath the flood
Under the rain alone;
And when the foot-stone made him slip,
He held by the head-stone.

The empty boat thraved i' the wind,
Against the postern tied.
'Hold still, you've brought my love with
me,
You shall take back my bride.'

But woe's my heart for Father John
And the saints he clamored to!
There's never a saint but Christopher
Might hale such buttocks through!

And 'Oh!' she said, 'on men's shoulders
I well had thought to wend,
And well to travel with a priest,
'But not to have cared or ken'd.

'And oh!' she said, 'it's well this way
That I thought to have fared, —
Not to have lighted at the kirk
But stopped in the kirkyard.

'For it's oh and oh I prayed to God,
Whose rest I hoped to win,
That when to-night at your board-head
You'd bid the feast begin,
This water past your window-sill
Might bear my body in.'

Now make the white bed warm and soft
And greet the merry morn.
The night the mother should have died
The young son shall be born.

THE CARD-DEALER

[Composed 1849. — Published 1852.]

COULD you not drink her gaze like wine?
Yet though its splendor swoon
Into the silence languidly
As a tune into a tune,
Those eyes unravel the coiled night
And know the stars at noon.

The gold that's heaped beside her hand,
In truth rich prize it were;
And rich the dreams that wreath her
brows
With magic stillness there;
And he were rich who should unwind
That woven golden hair.

Around her, where she sits, the dance
Now breathes its eager heat;
And not more lightly or more true
Fall there the dancers' feet
Than fall her cards on the bright board
As 'twere an heart that beat.

Her fingers let them softly through,
Smooth polished silent things;
And each one as it falls reflects
In swift light-shadowings,
Blood-red and purple, green and blue,
The great eyes of her rings.

Whom plays she with? With thee, who
lov'st

Those gems upon her hand;
With me, who search her secret brows;
With all men, bless'd or bann'd.
We play together, she and we,
Within a vain strange land:

A land without any order, —
Day even as night, (one saith,) —
Where who lieth down ariseth not
Nor the sleeper awakeneth;
A land of darkness as darkness itself
And of the shadow of death.

What be her cards, you ask? Even these: —
The heart, that doth but crave
More, having fed; the diamond,
Skilled to make base seem brave;
The club, for smiting in the dark;
The spade, to dig a grave.

And do you ask what game she plays?
With me 'tis lost or won;
With thee it is playing still; with him
It is not well begun;
But 'tis a game she plays with all
Beneath the sway o' the sun.

Thou seest the card that falls, — she knows
The card that followeth:
Her game in thy tongue is called Life,
As ebbs thy daily breath:
When she shall speak, thou'lt learn her
tongue
And know she calls it Death.

MY SISTER'S SLEEP

[Composed 1847-49. — Published 1850.]

SHE fell asleep on Christmas Eve:
At length the long-ungranted shade
Of weary eyelids overweigh'd
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
Over the bed from chime to chime,
Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little work-table was spread
With work to finish, For the glare
Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without there was a cold moon up,
Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling
years
Heard in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

'Glory unto the Newly Born!'
So, as said angels, she did say;
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'er head—should
they

Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned;
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word:
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept:
And both my arms fell, and I said,
'God knows I knew that she was dead.'
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o'clock
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
'Christ's blessing on the newly born!'

THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES

(From François Villon)

[Composed 1869. — Published 1869.]

TELL me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than hu-
man? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloïse, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the
Seine? . . .

But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaid, —
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine, —
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there, —
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword, —
But where are the snows of yester-year?

LOVE-LILY

[Composed 1869. — Published 1870.]

BETWEEN the hands, between the brows,
Between the lips of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born whose birth endows
My blood with fire to burn through me;
Who breathes upon my gazing eyes,
Who laughs and murmurs in mine ear,
At whose least touch my color flies,
And whom my life grows faint to hear.

Within the voice, within the heart,
Within the mind of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born who lifts apart
His tremulous wings and looks at me;
Who on my mouth his finger lays,
And shows, while whispering lutes con-
fer,

That Eden of Love's watered ways
Whose winds and spirits worship her.

Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and
voice,

Kisses and words of Love-Lily, —
Oh! bid me with your joy rejoice
Till riotous longing rest in me!
Ah! let not hope be still distraught,
But find in her its gracious goal,
Whose speech Truth knows not from her
thought
Nor Love her body from her soul.

SUDDEN LIGHT

[Composed 1854. — Published 1863.]

I HAVE been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell:
I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the
shore.

*Has caught Villon's music; diff.
from R's other work.*

You have been mine before, —
 How long ago I may not know:
 But just when at that swallow's soar
 Your neck turned so,
 Some veil did fall, — I knew it all of yore.

Has this been thus before?
 And shall not thus time's eddying
 flight
 Still with our lives our loves restore
 In death's despite,
 And day and night yield one delight once
 more?

A LITTLE WHILE

[Composed 1859. — Published 1870.]

A little while a little love
 The hour yet bears for thee and me
 Who have not drawn the veil to see
 If still our heaven be lit above.
 Thou merely, at the day's last sigh,
 Hast felt thy soul prolong the tone;
 And I have heard the night-wind cry
 And deemed its speech mine own.

A little while a little love
 The scattering autumn hoards for us
 Whose bower is not yet ruinous
 Nor quite unleaved our songless grove.
 Only across the shaken boughs
 We hear the flood-tides seek the sea,
 And deep in both our hearts they rouse
 One wail for thee and me.

A little while a little love
 May yet be ours who have not said
 The word it makes our eyes afraid
 To know that each is thinking of.
 Not yet the end: be our lips dumb
 In smiles a little season yet:
 I'll tell thee, when the end is come,
 How we may best forget.

PENUMBRA

[Composed 1853. — Published 1870.]

I did not look upon her eyes,
 (Though scarcely seen, with no surprise,
 'Mid many eyes a single look,)
 Because they should not gaze rebuke,
 At night, from stars in sky and brook.

I did not take her by the hand,
 (Though little was to understand
 From touch of hand all friends might take,)
 Because it should not prove a flake
 Burnt in my palm to boil and ache.

I did not listen to her voice,
 (Though none had noted, where at choice
 All might rejoice in listening.)
 Because no such a thing should cling
 In the wood's moan at evening.

I did not cross her shadow once,
 (Though from the hollow west the sun's
 Last shadow runs along so far,)
 Because in June it should not bar
 My ways, at noon when fevers are.

They told me she was sad that day,
 (Though wherefore tell what love's sooth-
 say.

Sooner than they, did register?)
 And my heart leapt and wept to her,
 And yet I did not speak nor stir.

So shall the tongues of the sea's foam
 (Though many voices therewith come
 From drowned hope's home to cry to me,)
 Bewail one hour the more, when sea
 And wind are one with memory.

THE WOODSPURGE

[Composed 1856. — Published 1870.]

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
 Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
 I had walked on at the wind's will, — *dead man*
 I sat now, for the wind was still. *my - an*

Between my knees my forehead was, — *artifice*
 My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
 My hair was over in the grass,
 My naked ears heard the day pass. *close above*

My eyes, wide open, had the run
 Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
 Among those few, out of the sun,
 The woodspurge flowered, three cups in
 one. *of a minute*
thing at a
moment

From perfect grief there need not be
 Wisdom or even memory:
 One thing then learnt remains to me, —
 The woodspurge has a cup of three.

THE HONEYSUCKLE

[Composed 1853. — Published 1870.]

I PLUCKED a honeysuckle where
 The hedge on high is quick with thorn,
 And climbing for the prize, was torn,
 And fouled my feet in quag-water;
 And by the thorns and by the wind
 The blossom that I took was thinn'd,
 And yet I found it sweet and fair.

Thence to a richer growth I came,
 Where, nursed in mellow intercourse,
 The honeysuckles sprang by scores,
 Not harried like my single stem,
 All virgin lamps of scent and dew.
 So from my hand that first I threw,
 Yet plucked not any more of them.

THE SEA-LIMITS

[Composed 1845. — Published 1870.]

CONSIDER the sea's listless chime:
 Time's self it is, made audible, —
 The murmur of the earth's own shell.
 Secret continuance sublime
 Is the sea's end: our sight may pass
 No furlong further. Since time was,
 This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's, — it hath
 The mournfulness of ancient life,
 Enduring always at dull strife.
 As the world's heart of rest and wrath,
 Its painful pulse is in the sands.
 Last utterly, the whole sky stands,
 Gray and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,
 Listen alone among the woods;
 Those voices of twin solitudes
 Shall have one sound alike to thee:
 Hark where the murmurs of thronged
 men
 Surge and sink back and surge again, —
 Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach
 And listen at its lips: they sigh
 The same desire and mystery,
 The echo of the whole sea's speech.
 And all mankind is thus at heart
 Not anything but what thou art:
 And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

SONNETS FOR PICTURES
FOR A VENETIAN PASTORAL

BY GIORGIONE

(In the *Louvre*)

[Composed 1849. — Published 1850.]

WATER, for anguish of the solstice: — nay,
 But dip the vessel slowly, — nay, but lean
 And hark how at its verge the wave sighs
 in
 Reluctant. Hush! Beyond all depth away
 The heat lies silent at the brink of day:
 Now the hand trails upon the viol-
 string
 That sobs, and the brown faces cease to
 sing,
 Sad with the whole of pleasure. Whither
 stray
 Her eyes now, from whose mouth the slim
 pipes creep
 And leave it pouting, while the shadowed
 grass
 Is cool against her naked side? Let
 be: —
 Say nothing now unto her lest she weep,
 Nor name this ever. Be it as it was, —
 Life touching lips with Immortality.

MARY'S GIRLHOOD

[Composed 1848. — Published 1849.]

THIS is that blessed Mary, pre-elect
 God's Virgin. Gone is a great while, and
 she
 Dwelt young in Nazareth of Galilee.
 Unto God's will she brought devout respect,
 Profound simplicity of intellect,
 And supreme patience. From her mo-
 ther's knee
 Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;
 Strong in grave peace; in pity circumspect.
 So held she through her girlhood; as it
 were
 An angel-watered lily, that near God
 Grows and is quiet. Till, one dawn at
 home,
 She woke in her white bed, and had no
 fear
 At all, — yet wept till sunshine, and felt
 awed:
 Because the fulness of the time was
 come.

LILITH *from painting*

[Composed 1867. — Published 1868.]

OF Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
 (The witch he loved before the gift of
 Eve,)
 That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue
 could deceive,
 And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
 And still she sits, young while the earth
 is old,
 And, subtly of herself contemplative,
 Draws men to watch the bright net she
 can weave,
 Till heart and body and life are in its
 hold.
 The rose and poppy are her flowers; for
 where
 Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed
 scent
 And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall
 snare?
 Lol as that youth's eyes burned at thine,
 so went
 Thy spell through him, and left his
 straight neck bent,
 And round his heart one strangling golden
 hair.

SIBYLLA PALMIFERA

[Composed 1867. — Published 1868.]

UNDER the arch of Life, where love and
 death,
 Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I
 saw
 Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze
 struck awe,
 I drew it in as simply as my breath.

Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee, — which
can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and
wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still, — long
known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem, — the
beat
Following her daily of thy heart and
feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and
days!

SONNETS FROM THE HOUSE OF
LIFE

THE SONNET

*one of great beauty
poems in Eng.*
*A sonnet is a moment's monument, —
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that
it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fullness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time
see
Its flowering crest imperaled and orient.*

*A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul, — its converse, to what Power
't is due: —
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve: or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavern-
ous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.*

I. LOVE ENTHRONED

I MARKED all kindred Powers the heart
finds fair: —
Truth, with awed lips; and Hope, with
eyes upcast,
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the
ashen Past
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare;
And Youth, with still some single golden
hair
Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last
Embrace wherein two sweet arms held
him fast;
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death
to wear.
Love's throne was not with these; but far
above
All passionate wind of welcome and fare-
well
He sat in breathless bowers they dream
not of;

Though Truth foreknow Love's heart,
and Hope foretell,
And fame be for Love's sake desirable,
And Youth be dear, and Life be sweet to
Love.

II. BRIDAL BIRTH

As WHEN desire, long darkling, dawns, and
first
The mother looks upon the newborn
child,
Even so my Lady stood at gaze and
smiled
When her soul knew at length the Love it
nurs'd.
Born with her life, creature of poignant
thirst
And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love
lay
Quickening in darkness, till a voice that
day
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were
burst.
Now, shadowed by his wings, our faces
yearn
Together, as his fullgrown feet now
range
The grove, and his warm hands our
couch prepare
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn
Be born his children, when Death's nup-
tial change
Leaves us for light the halo of his
hair.

IV. LOVESIGHT

WHEN do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine
eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee
made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two
alone)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage
lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?
O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of
thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring, —
How then should sound upon Life's dark-
ening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves
of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

V. HEART'S HOPE

By what word's power, the key of paths
untrod,
Shall I the difficult deeps of Love ex-
plore,

Till parted waves of Song yield up the shore
 Even as that sea which Israel crossed dry-shod?
 For lo! in some poor rhythmic period,
 Lady, I fain would tell how evermore
 Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
 Thee from myself, neither our love from God.

Yea, in God's name, and Love's, and thine,
 would I

Draw from one loving heart such evidence
 As to all hearts all things shall signify;
 Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and intense
 As instantaneous penetrating sense,
 In Spring's birth-hour, of other Springs
 gone by.

IX. PASSION AND WORSHIP

ONE flame-winged brought a white-winged
 harp-player
 Even where my lady and I lay all alone;
 Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is unknown;
 Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here:
 Only my strains are to Love's dear ones dear."

Then said I: "Through thine hautboy's
 rapturous tone
 Unto my lady still this harp makes
 moan,
 And still she deems the cadence deep and
 clear."

Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of
 Love,
 And this Love's Worship: both he plights
 to me.
 Thy mastering music walks the sunlit
 sea:

But where wan water trembles in the grove
 And the wan moon is all the light thereof.
 This harp still makes my name its voluntary."

X. THE PORTRAIT

O LORD of all compassionate control,
 O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
 Under my hand to praise her name, and
 show

Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
 That he who seeks her beauty's furthest
 goal,

Beyond the light that the sweet glances
 throw

And reffluent wave of the sweet smile,
 may know

The very sky and sea-line of her soul.

Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning
 throat

The mouth's mould testifies of voice and
 kiss,

The shadowed eyes remember and fore-
 see.
 Her face is made her shrine. Let all men
 note
 That in all years (O Love, thy gift is
 this!)
 They that would look on her must
 come to me.

XI. THE LOVE-LETTER

WARMED by her hand and shadowed by her
 hair

As close she leaned and poured her heart
 through thee,
 Whereof the articulate throbs accompany
 The smooth black stream that makes thy
 whiteness fair,—
 Sweet fluttering sheet, even of her breath
 aware,—

Oh let thy silent song disclose to me
 That soul wherewith her lips and eyes
 agree
 Like married music in Love's answering
 air.

Fain had I watched her when, at some fond
 thought,
 Her bosom to the writing closelier
 press'd,
 And her breast's secrets peered into her
 breast;
 When, through eyes raised an instant, her
 soul sought
 My soul, and from the sudden confluence
 caught
 The words that made her love the love-
 liest.

XV. THE BIRTH-BOND

HAVE you not noted, in some family
 Where two were born of a first marriage-
 bed,

How still they own their gracious bond,
 though fed
 And nursed on the forgotten breast and
 knee?—

How to their father's children they shall be
 In act and thought of one goodwill; but
 each
 Shall for the other have, in silence
 speech,

And in a word complete community?

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it,
 love,

That among souls allied to mine was yet
 One nearer kindred than life hinted of.

O born with me somewhere that men for-
 get,

And though in years of sight and sound
 unmet,

Known for my soul's birth-partner well
 enough!

XVIII. GENIUS IN BEAUTY

BEAUTY like hers is genius. Not the call
Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime,
—Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones
of time,—

Is more with compassed mysteries musical;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet
footfall

More gathered gifts exuberant Life be-
queathes

Than doth this sovereign face, whose
love-spell breathes

Even from its shadowed contour on the
wall.

As many men are poets in their youth,
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires
prolong

Even through all change the indomitable
song;

So in likewise the envenomed years, whose
tooth

Rends shallower grace with ruin void of
ruth,

Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no
wrong.

XIX. SILENT NOON

YOUR hands lie open in the long fresh
grass,—

The finger-points look through like rosy
blooms:

Your eyes smile peace. The pasture
gleams and glooms

'Neath billowing skies that scatter and
amass.

All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver
edge

Where the cow-parsley skirts the haw-
thorn-hedge.

'T is visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the
dragon-fly

Hangs like a blue thread loosened from
the sky:—

So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from
above.

Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless
dower,

This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of
love.

XXI. LOVE-SWEETNESS

SWEET dimness of her loosened hair's
downfall

About thy face; her sweet hands round
thy head

In gracious fostering union garlanded;

Her tremulous smiles; her glances' sweet
recall

Of love; her murmuring sighs memorial;
Her mouth's culled sweetness by thy
kisses shed

On cheeks and neck and eyelids, and so
led

Back to her mouth which answers there
for all:—

What sweeter than these things, except the
thing

In lacking which all these would lose their
sweet:—

The confident heart's still fervor: the
swift beat

And soft subsidence of the spirit's wing,
Then when it feels, in cloud-girt wayfaring,

The breath of kindred plumes against its
feet?

XXIV. PRIDE OF YOUTH

EVEN as a child, of sorrow that we give
The dead, but little in his heart can find

Since without need of thought to his
clear mind

Their turn it is to die and his to live:—
Even so the wingèd New Love smiles to
receive

Along his eddying plumes the auroral
wind,

Nor, forward glorying, casts one look
behind

Where night-rack shrouds the Old Love
fugitive.

There is a change in every hour's recall,
And the last cowslip in the fields we see

On the same day with the first corn-
poppy.

Alas for hourly change! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud Youth

lets fall,
Even as the beads of a told rosary!

XXVII. HEART'S COMPASS

SOMETIMES thou seem'st not as thyself
alone,

But as the meaning of all things that are;
A breathless wonder, shadowing forth

afar
Some heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon;

Whose unstirred lips are music's visible
tone;

Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul un-
bar,

Being of its furthest fires oracular;—
The evident heart of all life sown and
mown.

Even such Love is; and is not thy name
Love?

Yea, by thy hand the Love-god rends
apart

All gathering clouds of Night's ambig-
uous art;

Flings them far down, and sets thine eyes
above;
And simply, as some gage of flower or
glove,
Stakes with a smile the world against thy
heart.

XXXI. HER GIFTS

HIGH grace, the dower of queens; and
therewithal
Some wood-born wonder's sweet simplic-
ity;
A glance like water brimming with the
sky
Or hyacinth-light where forest-shadows
fall;
Such thrilling pallor of cheek as doth en-
thrall
The heart; a mouth whose passionate
forms imply
All music and all silence held thereby;
Deep golden locks, her sovereign coronal;

A round reared neck, meet column of
Love's shrine
To cling to when the heart takes sanc-
tuary;
Hands which for ever at Love's bidding
be,
And soft-stirred feet still answering to his
sign —
These are her gifts, as tongue may tell
them o'er.
Breathe low her name, my soul; for that
means more.

XXXIV. THE DARK GLASS

Nor I myself know all my love for thee:
How should I reach so far, who cannot
weigh
To-morrow's dower by gage of yester-
day?
Shall birth and death, and all dark names
that be
As doors and windows bared to some loud
sea,
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face
with spray;
And shall my sense pierce love,—the
last relay
And ultimate outpost of eternity?

Lo! what am I to Love, the lord of all?
One murmuring shell he gathers from
the sand,—
One little heart-flame sheltered in his
hand.
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clear-
est call
And veriest touch of powers primordial
That any hour-girt life may understand.

XL. SEVERED SELVES

Two separate divided silences,
Which, brought together, would find lov-
ing voice;
Two glances which together would rejoice
In love, now lost like stars beyond dark
trees;
Two hands apart whose touch alone gives
ease;
Two bosoms which, heart-shrined with
mutual flame,
Would, meeting in one clasp, be made the
same;
Two souls, the shores wave-mocked of
sundering seas:—

Such are we now. Ah! may our hope fore-
cast
Indeed one hour again, when on this
stream
Of darkened love once more the light shall
gleam?—
An hour how slow to come, how quickly
past,—
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves
at last
Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated
dream.

XLVIII. DEATH-IN-LOVE

THERE came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his
gonfalon:
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought
thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens
to,
Shook in its folds; and through my heart
its power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all
was new.

But a veiled woman followed, and she
caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and
cling,—
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's
wing,
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,
And said to me, "Behold, there is no
breath:
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

LIII. WITHOUT HER

WHAT of her glass without her? The
blank gray
There where the pool is blind of the
moon's face.
Her dress without her? The tossed
empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed
away.

Her paths without her? Day's appointed
 sway
 Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed
 place
 Without her? Tears, ah me! for love's
 good grace
 And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her? Nay,
 poor heart,
 Of thee what word remains ere speech
 be still?
 A wayfarer by barren ways and chill,
 Steep ways and weary, without her thou
 art,
 Where the long cloud, the long wood's
 counterpart,
 Sheds doubled darkness up the laboring
 hill.

LV. STILLBORN LOVE

THE hour which might have been yet might
 not be,
 Which man's and woman's heart con-
 ceived and bore
 Yet whereof life was barren,—on what
 shore
 Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?
 Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
 It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute
 before
 The house of Love, hears through the
 echoing door
 His hours elect in choral consonancy.

But lo! what wedded souls now hand in
 hand
 Together tread at last the immortal strand
 With eyes where burning memory lights
 love home?
 Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
 And leaped to them and in their faces
 yearned:—
 "I am your child: O parents, ye have
 come!"

LXIII. INCLUSIVENESS

THE changing guests, each in a different
 mood,
 Sit at the roadside table and arise:
 And every life among them in likewise.
 Is a soul's board set daily with new food.
 What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to
 brood
 How that face shall watch his when cold
 it lies?—
 Or thought, as his own mother kissed his
 eyes,
 Of what her kiss was when his father
 wooed?
 May not this ancient room thou sit'st in
 dwell
 In separate living souls for joy or pain?
 Nay, all its corners may be painted plain

Where Heaven shows pictures of some life
 spent well
 And may be stamped, a memory all in
 vain,
 Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.

LXV. KNOWN IN VAIN

As two whose love, first foolish, widening
 scope,
 Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,
 The Holy of holies; who because they
 scoff'd
 Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to
 cope
 With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven
 should ope;
 Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they
 laugh'd
 In speech; nor speak, at length; but sit-
 ting oft
 Together, within hopeless sight of hope
 For hours are silent:—So it happeneth
 When Work and Will awake too late,
 to gaze
 After their life sailed by, and hold their
 breath.
 Ah! who shall dare to search through
 what sad maze
 Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
 Follow the desultory feet of Death?

LXX. THE HILL SUMMIT

THIS feast-day of the sun, his altar there
 In the broad west has blazed for vesper-
 song;
 And I have loitered in the vale too long
 And gaze now a belated worshipper.
 Yet may I not forget that I was 'ware,
 So journeying, of his face at intervals
 Transfigured where the fringed horizon
 falls,—
 A fiery bush with coruscating hair.

And now that I have climbed and won this
 height,
 I must tread downward through the slop-
 ing shade
 And travel the bewildered tracks till night.
 Yet for this hour I still may here be
 stayed
 And see the gold air and the silver fade
 And the last bird fly into the last light.

LXXI. THE CHOICE—I

EAT thou and drink; to-morrow thou shalt
 die.
 Surely the earth, that's wise being very
 old,
 Needs not our help. Then loose me, love,
 and hold
 Thy sultry hair up from my face; that I

May pour for thee this golden wine, brim-
high,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like
gold.

We'll drown all hours: thy song, while
hours are toll'd,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing
sky.

Now kiss, and think that there are really
those,

My own high-bosomed beauty, who in-
crease

Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might
choose our way!

Through many years they toil; then on
a day

They die not, — for their life was death,
— but cease;

And round their narrow lips the mould
falls close.

LXXII. THE CHOICE — II

WATCH thou and fear; tomorrow thou
shalt die.

O art thou sure thou shalt have time for
death?

Is not the day which God's word prom-
iseth

To come man knows not when? In yonder
sky,

Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth:
can I

Or thou assure him of his goal? God's
breath

Even at this moment haply quickeneth

The air to a flame; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the
daylight here.

And dost thou prate of all that man shall
do?

Canst thou, who hast but plagues, pre-
sume to be

Glad in his gladness that comes after
thee?

Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell?
Go to:

Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

LXXIII. THE CHOICE — III

THINK thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt
die.

Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon
the shore,

Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is
all gone o'er"

Up all his years, steeply, with strain and
sigh,

Man clomb until he touched the truth;
and I,

Even I, am he whom it was destined
for."

How should this be? Art thou then so
much more

Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst
reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-
washed mound

Unto the furthest flood-brim look with
me;

Then reach on with thy thought till it be
drown'd.

Miles and miles distant though the last
line be,

And though thy soul sail leagues and
leagues beyond, —

Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there
is more sea.

LXXXI. MEMORIAL THRESHOLDS

WHAT place so strange, — though unre-
vealed snow

With unimaginable fires arise

At the earth's end, — what passion of
surprise

Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long
ago?

Lo! this is none but I this hour; and lo!

This is the very place which to mine eyes
Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,

'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I
know.

City, of thine a single simple door,

By some new Power reduplicate, must be

Even yet my life-porch in eternity,

Even with one presence filled, as once of
yore:

Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-
strown floor

Thee and thy years and these my words
and me.

LXXXVI. LOST DAYS

THE lost days of my life until to-day,

What were they, could I see them on the
street

Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of
wheat

Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to

pay?

Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty
feet?

Or such spilt water as in dreams must
cheat

The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death

God knows I know the faces I shall see,

Each one a murdered self, with low last

breath.

"I am thyself, — what hast thou done to
me?"

"And I — and I — thyself," (lo! each one
saith.)

"And thou thyself to all eternity!"

XC. "RETRO ME, SATHANA!"

GET thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curl'd,
 Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
 Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
 So shall Time be; and as the void car,
 hurled
 Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world:
 Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
 It shall be sought and not found anywhere.
 Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,
 Thy perilous wings can beat and break like lath
 Much mightiness of men to win thee praise.
 Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
 Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered path,
 Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
 For certain years, for certain months and days.

XCII. THE SUN'S SHAME

BEHOLDING youth and hope in mockery caught
 From life; and mocking pulses that remain
 When the soul's death of bodily death is fain;
 Honor unknown, and honor known unsought;
 And penury's sedulous self-torturing thought
 On gold, whose master therewith buys his bane;
 And longed-for woman longing all in vain
 For lonely man with love's desire distraught;
 And wealth, and strength, and power, and pleasantness,
 Given unto bodies of whose souls men say,
 None poor and weak, slavish and foul, as they:—
 Beholding these things, I behold no less
 The blushing morn and blushing eve confess
 The shame that loads the intolerable day.

XCVII. A SUPERScription

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
 I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell;
 Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell
 Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between;

Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
 Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
 Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
 Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.

Mark me, how still I am! But should there dart
 One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
 Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
 Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
 Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
 Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

CI. THE ONE HOPE

WHEN vain desire at last and vain regret
 Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
 What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
 And teach the forgetful to forget?
 Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
 Or may the soul at once in a green plain
 Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
 And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?
 Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
 Between the scripted petals softly blown
 Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
 Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er
 But only the one Hope's one name be there—
 Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

THREE SHADOWS

[Composed 1876. — Published 1881.]

I LOOKED and saw your eyes
 In the shadow of your hair,
 As a traveller sees the stream
 In the shadow of the wood;
 And I said, "My faint heart sighs,
 Ah me! to linger there,
 To drink deep and to dream
 In that sweet solitude."

I looked and saw your heart
 In the shadow of your eyes,
 As a seeker sees the gold
 In the shadow of the stream;
 And I said, "Ah me! what art
 Should win the immortal prize,
 Whose want must make life cold
 And Heaven a hollow dream?"

I looked and saw your love
 In the shadow of your heart,
 As a diver sees the pearl
 In the shadow of the sea;
 And I murmured, not above
 My breath, but all apart,—
 "Ah! you can love, true girl,
 And is your love for me?"

INSOMNIA

[Composed 1881. — Published 1881.]

THIN are the night-skirts left behind
 By daybreak hours that onward creep
 And thin, alas! the shred of sleep
 That wavers with the spirit's wind:
 But in half-dreams that shift and roll
 And still remember and forget,
 My soul this hour has drawn your soul
 A little nearer yet.

Our lives, most dear, are never near,
 Our thoughts are never far apart,
 Though all that draws us heart to heart
 Seems fainter now and now more clear.
 To-night Love claims his full control,
 And with desire and with regret
 My soul this hour has drawn your soul
 A little nearer yet.

Is there a home where heavy earth
 Melts to bright air that breathes no pain,
 Where water leaves no thirst again
 And springing fire is Love's new birth?
 If faith long bound to one true goal
 May there at length its hope beget,
 My soul that hour shall draw your soul
 For ever nearer yet.

THE CLOUD CONFINES

[Composed 1871. — Published 1872.]

THE day is dark and the night
 To him that would search their heart;
 No lips of cloud that will part
 Nor morning song in the light:
 Only, gazing alone,
 To him wild shadows are shown,
 Deep under deep unknown
 And height above unknown height.
 Still we say as we go,—
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

The Past is over and fled;
 Named new, we name it the old;
 Thereof some tale hath been told,
 But no word comes from the dead;
 Whether at all they be,
 Or whether as bond or free,
 Or whether they too were we,

Or by what spell they have sped.
 Still we say as we go,—
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of hate
 That beats in thy breast, O Time?—
 Red strife from the furthest prime,
 And anguish of fierce debate;
 War that shatters her slain,
 And peace that grinds them as grain,
 And eyes fixed ever in vain
 On the pitiless eyes of Fate.
 Still we say as we go,—
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of love
 That bleeds in thy breast, O Man?—
 Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban
 Of fangs that mock them above;
 Thy bells prolonged unto knells,
 Thy hope that a breath dispels,
 Thy bitter forlorn farewells
 And the empty echoes thereof?
 Still we say as we go,—
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

The sky leans dumb on the sea,
 Awearied with all its wings;
 And oh! the song the sea sings
 Is dark everlastingly.
 Our past is clean forgot,
 Our present is and is not,
 Our future's a sealed seedplot,
 And what betwixt them are we?—
 We who say as we go,—
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

THE DAY-DREAM

(FOR A PICTURE)

THE thronged boughs of the shadowy sycamore
 Still bear young leaflets half the summer
 through;
 From when the robin 'gainst the unhidden
 blue
 Perched dark, till now, deep in the leafy
 core,
 The embowered throstle's urgent wood-
 notes soar
 Through summer silence. Still the leaves
 come new;
 Yet never rosy-sheathed as those which
 drew
 Their spiral tongues from spring-buds here-
 tofore.

Within the branching shade of Reverie
Dreams even may spring till autumn: yet
none be

Like woman's budding day-dream spirit-
fann'd.

Lo! tow'rd deep skies, not deeper than her
look,

She dreams; till now on her forgotten
book

Drops the forgotten blossom from her
hand.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

JAMES I OF SCOTS. — 20TH FEBRUARY, 1437

NOTE. — Tradition says that Catherine Douglas, in honor of her heroic act when she barred the door with her arm against the murderers of James the First of Scots, received popularly the name of "Barlass." The name remains to her descendants, the Barlas family, in Scotland, who bear for their crest a broken arm. She married Alexander Lovell of Bolunnie.

A few stanzas from King James's lovely poem, known as *The King's Quhair*, are quoted in the course of this ballad. The writer must express regret for the necessity which has compelled him to shorten the ten-syllabled lines to eight syllables, in order that they might harmonize with the ballad metre.

[Composed 1881. — Published 1881.]

I CATHERINE am a Douglas born,
A name to all Scots dear;
And Kate Barlass they've called me now
Through many a waning year.

This old arm's withered now. 'T was once
Most deft 'mong maidens all
To rein the steed, to wing the shaft,
To smite the palm-play ball.

In hall adown the close-linked dance
It has shone most white and fair;
It has been the rest for a true lord's head,
And many a sweet babe's nursing-bed,
And the bar to a King's chambère.

Aye, lasses, draw round Kate Barlass,
And hark with bated breath
How good King James, King Robert's son,
Was foully done to death.

Through all the days of his gallant youth
The princely James was pent,
By his friends at first and then by his foes,
In long imprisonment.

For the elder Prince, the kingdom's heir,
By treason's murderous brood
Was slain; and the father quaked for the
child

With the royal mortal blood.

I' the Bass Rock fort, by his father's care,
Was his childhood's life assured;

And Henry the subtle Bolingbroke,
Proud England's King, 'neath the southron
yoke

His youth for long years immured.

Yet in all things meet for a kingly man
Himself did he approve;
And the nightingale through his prison-
wall
Taught him both lore and love.

For once, when the bird's song drew him
close
To the opened window-pane,
In her bowers beneath a lady stood,
A light of life to his sorrowful mood,
Like a lily amid the rain.

And for her sake, to the sweet bird's note,
He framed a sweeter Song,
More sweet than ever a poet's heart
Gave yet to the English tongue.

She was a lady of royal blood;
And when, past sorrow and teen,
He stood where still through his crownless
years
His Scottish realm had been,
At Scone were the happy lovers crowned,
A heart-wed King and Queen.

But the bird may fall from the bough of
youth,
And song be turned to moan,
And Love's storm-cloud be the shadow of
Hate,
When the tempest-waves of a troubled
State
Are beating against a throne.

Yet well they loved; and the god of Love,
Whom well the King had sung,
Might find on the earth no truer hearts
His lowliest swains among.

From the days when first she rode abroad
With Scottish maids in her train,
I Catherine Douglas won the trust
Of my mistress sweet Queen Jane.

And oft she sighed, "To be born a King!"
And oft along the way
When she saw the homely lovers pass
She has said, "Alack the day!"

Years waned, — the loving and toiling
years:
Till England's wrong renewed
Drove James, by outrage cast on his crown,
To the open field of feud.

'T was when the King and his host were
met
At the leaguer of Roxbro' hold,
The Queen o' the sudden sought his camp
With a tale of dread to be told.

And she showed him a secret letter writ
That spoke of treasonous strife,
And how a band of his noblest lords
Were sworn to take his life.

"And it may be here or it may be there,
In the camp or the court," she said:
"But for my sake come to your people's
arms
And guard your royal head."

Quoth he, "'T is the fifteenth day of the
siege,
And the castle's nigh to yield."
"O face your foes on your throne," she
cried,
"And show the power you wield;
And under your Scottish people's love
You shall sit as under your shield."

At the fair Queen's side I stood that day
When he bade them raise the siege,
And back to his Court he sped to know
How the lords would meet their Liege.

But when he summoned his Parliament,
The louring brows hung round,
Like clouds that circle the mountain-head
Ere the first low thunders sound.

For he had tamed the nobles' lust
And curbed their power and pride,
And reached out an arm to right the poor
Through Scotland far and wide;
And many a lordly wrong-doer
By the headsman's axe had died.

'T was then upspoke Sir Robert Græme,
The bold o'er-mastering man:—
"O King, in the name of your Three Es-
tates
I set you under their ban!

"For, as your lords made oath to you
Of service and fealty,
Even in like wise you pledged your oath
Their faithful sire to be:—

"Yet all we here that are nobly sprung
Have mourned dear kith and kin
Since first for the Scottish Barons' curse
Did your bloody rule begin."

With that he laid his hands on his King:—
"Is this not so, my lords?"
But of all who had sworn to league with
him
Not one spake back to his words.

Quoth the King:—"Thou speak'st but for
one Estate,
Nor doth it avow thy gage.
Let my liege lords hale this traitor hence!"
The Græme fired dark with rage:—
"Who works for lesser men than himself,
He earns but a witless wage!"

But soon from the dungeon where he lay
He won by privy plots,
And forth he fled with a price on his head
To the country of the Wild Scots.

And word there came from Sir Robert
Græme

To the King at Edinbro':—
"No Liege of mine thou art; but I see
From this day forth alone in thee
God's creature, my mortal foe.

"Through thee are my wife and children
lost,
My heritage and lands;
And when my God shall show me a way,
Thyself my mortal foe will I slay
With these my proper hands."

Against the coming of 'Christmastide
That year the King bade call
I' the Black Friars' Charterhouse of Perth
A solemn festival.

And we of his household rode with him
In a close-ranked company:
But not till the sun had sunk from his
throne
Did we reach the Scottish Sea.

That eve was clenched for a boding storm,
'Neath a toilsome moon half seen;
The cloud stooped low and the surf rose
high;
And where there was a line of the sky,
Wild wings loomed dark between.

And on a rock of the black beach-side
By the veiled moon dimly lit,
There was something seemed to heave with
life
As the King drew nigh to it.

And was it only the tossing furze
Or brake of the waste sea-wold?
Or was it an eagle bent to the blast?
When near we came, we knew it at last
For a woman tattered and old.

But it seemed as though by a fire within
Her writhen limbs were wrung;
And as soon as the King was close to her,
She stood up gaunt and strong.

'T was then the moon sailed clear of the
rack
On high in her hollow dome;
And still as aloft with hoary crest
Each clamorous wave rang home,
Like fire in snow the moonlight blazed
Amid the champing foam.

And the woman held his eyes with her
eyes:—

"O King, thou art come at last;
But thy wraith has haunted the Scottish
Sea
To my sight for four years past.

"Four years it is since first I met,
'Twixt the Duchray and the Dhu,
A shape whose feet clung close in a
shroud,
And that shape for thine I knew.

"A year again, and on Inchkeith Isle
I saw thee pass in the breeze,
With the cerecloth risen above thy feet
And wound about thy knees.

"And yet a year, in the Links of Forth,
As a wanderer without rest,
Thou cam'st with both thine arms i' the
shroud
That clung high up thy breast.

"And in this hour I find thee here,
And well mine eyes may note
That the winding-sheet hath passed thy
breast
And risen around thy throat.

"And when I meet thee again, O King,
That of death hast such sore drouth, —
Except thou turn again on this shore, —
The winding-sheet shall have moved once
more
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

"O King, whom poor men bless for their
King,
Of thy fate be not so fain;
But these my words for God's message
take,
And turn thy steed, O King, for her sake
Who rides beside thy rein!"

While the woman spoke, the King's horse
reared
As if it would breast the sea,
And the Queen turned pale as she heard on
the gale
The voice die dolorously.

When the woman ceased, the steed was still,
But the King gazed on her yet,
And in silence save for the wail of the sea
His eyes and her eyes met.

At last he said: — "God's ways are His
own;
Man is but shadow and dust.
Last night I prayed by His altar-stone;
To-night I wend to the Feast of His Son;
And in Him I set my trust.

"I have held my people in sacred charge,
And have not feared the sting
Of proud men's hate, — to His will resign'd
Who has but one same death for a hind
And one same death for a King.

"And if God in His wisdom have brought
close
The day when I must die,
That day by water or fire or air
My feet shall fall in the destined snare
Wherever my road may lie.

"What man can say but the Fiend hath set
Thy sorcery on my path,
My heart with the fear of death to fill,
And turn me against 'God's very will
To sink in His burning wrath?"

The woman stood as the train rode past,
And moved nor limb nor eye;
And when we were shipped, we saw her
there
Still standing against the sky.

As the ship made way, the moon once
more
Sank slow in her rising pall;
And I thought of the shrouded wraith of
the King,
And I said, "The Heavens know all."

And now, ye lasses, must ye hear
How my name is Kate Barlass: —
But a little thing, when all the tale
Is told of the weary mass
Of crime and woe which in Scotland's
realm
God's will let come to pass.

'T was in the Charterhouse of Perth
That the King and all his Court
Were met, the Christmas Feast being done,
For solace and disport.

'T was a wind-wild eve in February,
And against the casement-pane
The branches smote like summoning hands
And muttered the driving rain.

And when the wind swooped over the lift
And made the whole heaven frown,
It seemed a grip was laid on the walls
To tug the housetop down.

And the Queen was there, more stately fair
Than a lily in garden set;
And the King was loth to stir from her
side;
For as on the day when she was his bride,
Even so he loved her yet.

And the Earl of Athole, the King's false
friend,
Sat with him at the board;
And Robert Stuart the chamberlain
Who had sold his sovereign Lord.

Yet the traitor Christopher Chaumber there
Would fain have told him all,
And vainly four times that night he strove
To reach the King through the hall,

But the wine is bright at the goblet's brim
Though the poison lurk beneath;
And the apples still are red on the tree
Within whose shade may the adder be
That shall turn thy life to death.

There was a knight of the King's fast
friends
Whom he called the King of Love;
And to such bright cheer and courtesy
That name might best behave.

And the King and Queen both loved him
well
For his gentle knightliness;
And with him the King, as that eve wore
on,
Was playing at the chess.

And the King said, (for he thought to jest
And soothe the Queen thereby;) —
"In a book 't is writ that this same year
A King shall in Scotland die.

"And I have pondered the matter o'er,
And this have I found, Sir Hugh, —
There are but two Kings on Scottish
ground,
And those Kings are I and you.

"And I have a wife and a newborn heir,
And you are yourself alone;
So stand you stark at my side with me
To guard our double throne.

"For here sit I and my wife and child,
As well your heart shall approve,
In full surrender and soothfastness,
Beneath your Kingdom of Love."

And the Knight laughed, and the Queen
too smiled:
But I knew her heavy thought,
And I strove to find in the good King's jest
What cheer might thence be wrought.

And I said, "My Liege, for the Queen's
dear love
Now sing the song that of old
You made, when a captive Prince you lay.
And the nightingale sang sweet on the
spray,
In Windsor's castle-hold."

Then he smiled the smile I knew so well
When he thought to please the Queen;
The smile which under all bitter frowns
Of hate that rose between,
For ever dwelt at the poet's heart
Like the bird of love unseen.

And he kissed her hand and took his harp,
And the music sweetly rang;
And when the song burst forth, it seemed
'T was the nightingale that sang.

*"Worship, ye lovers, on this May:
Of bliss your kalends are begun:
Sing with us, Away, Winter, away!
Come, Summer, the sweet season and
sun!
Awake for shame,—your heaven is
won,—
And amorously your heads lift all:
Thank Love, that you to his grace doth
call!"*

But when he bent to the Queen, and sang
The speech whose praise was hers,
It seemed his voice was the voice of the
Spring
And the voice of the bygone years.

*"The fairest and the freshest flower
That ever I saw before that hour,
The which o' the sudden made to start
The blood of my body to my heart.
* * * **

*Ah sweet, are ye a worldly creature
Or heavenly thing in form of nature?"*

And the song was long, and richly stored
With wonder and beauteous things;
And the harp was tuned to every change
Of minstrel ministerings;
But when he spoke of the Queen at the
last,
Its strings were his own heart-strings.

*"Unworthy but only of her grace,
Upon Love's rock that's easy and sure,
In guerdon of all my love's space
She took me her humble creature.
Thus fell my blissful adventure
In youth of love that from day to day
Flowereth aye new, and further I say.*

*"To reckon all the circumstance
As it happed when lessen gan my sore,
Of my rancor and woful chance,
It were too long,—I have done therefor.
And of this flower I say no more
But unto my help her heart hath tended
And even from death her man defended."*

*"Aye, even from death," to myself I said;
For I thought of the day when she
Had borne him the news, at Roxbro' siege,
Of the fell confederacy.*

But Death even then took aim as he sang
With an arrow deadly bright;
And the grinning skull lurked grimly aloof,
And the wings were spread far over the
roof

More dark than the winter night.

Yet truly along the amorous song
Of Love's high pomp and state,
There were words of Fortune's trackless
doom

And the dreadful face of Fate.

And oft have I heard again in dreams
The voice of dire appeal
In which the King then sang of the pit
That is under Fortune's wheel.

*"And under the wheel beheld I there
An ugly Pit as deep as hell,
That to behold I quaked for fear:
And this I heard, that who therein fell
Came no more up, tidings to tell:
Whereat, astound of the fearful sight,
I wist not what to do for fright."*

And oft has my thought called up again
These words of the changeful song:—
*"Wist thou thy pain and thy travail
To come, well might'st thou weep and
wail!"*

And our wail, O God! is long.

But the song's end was all of his love;
And well his heart was grac'd
With her smiling lips and her tear-bright
eyes
As his arm went round her waist.

And on the swell of her long fair throat
Close clung the necklet-chain
As he bent her pearl-tir'd head aside,
And in the warmth of his love and pride
He kissed her lips full fain.

And her true face was a rosy red,
The very red of the rose
That, couched on the happy garden-bed,
In the summer sunlight glows.

And all the wondrous things of love
That sang so sweet through the song
Were in the look that met in their eyes,
And the look was deep and long.

'T was then a knock came at the outer
gate,
And the usher sought the King.
"The woman you met by the Scottish Sea,
My Liege, would tell you a thing;
And she says that her present need for
speech
Will bear no gainsaying."

And the King said: "The hour is late;
To-morrow will serve, I ween."
Then he charged the usher strictly, and
said:
"No word of this to the Queen."

But the usher came again to the King.
"Shall I call her back?" quoth he:
"For as she went on her way, she cried,
'Woe! Woe! then the thing must be!'"

And the King paused, but he did not speak.
Then he called for the Voidee-cup:
And as we heard the twelfth hour strike,
There by true lips and false lips alike
Was the draught of trust drained up.

So with reverence meet to King and Queen,
To bed went all from the board;
And the last to leave of the courtly train
Was Robert Stuart the chamberlain
Who had sold his sovereign lord.

And all the locks of the chamber door
Had the traitor riven and brast;
And that Fate might win sure way from
afar,
He had drawn out every bolt and bar
That made the entrance fast.

And now at midnight he stole his way
To the moat of the outer wall,
And laid strong hurdles closely across
Where the traitors' tread should fall.

But we that were the Queen's bower-maids
Alone were left behind;
And with heed we drew the curtains close
Against the winter wind.

And now that all was still through the
hall,
More clearly we heard the rain
That clamored ever against the glass
And the boughs that beat on the pane.

But the fire was bright in the ingle-nook,
And through empty space around
The shadows cast on the arras'd wall
'Mid the pictured kings stood sudden and
tall
Like spectres sprung from the ground.

And the bed was dight in a deep alcove;
And as he stood by the fire
The king was still in talk with the Queen
While he doffed his goodly attire.

And the song had brought the image back
Of many a bygone year;
And many a loving word they said
With hand in hand and head laid to head;
And none of us went anear.

But Love was weeping outside the house,
A child in the piteous rain;
And as he watched the arrow of Death,
He wailed for his own shafts close in the
sheath
That never should fly again.

And now beneath the window arose
A wild voice suddenly:
And the King reared straight, but the
Queen fell back
As for bitter dule to dree;
And all of us knew the woman's voice
Who spoke by the Scottish Sea.

"O King," she cried, "in an evil hour
They drove me from thy gate;
And yet my voice must rise to thine ears;
But alas! it comes too late!

"Last night at mid-watch, by Aberdour,
When the moon was dead in the skies,
O King, in a death-light of thine own
I saw thy shape arise.

"And in full season, as erst I said,
The doom had gained its growth;
And the shroud had risen above thy neck
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

"And no moon woke, but the pale dawn
broke,
And still thy soul stood there;
And I thought its silence cried to my soul
As the first rays crowned its hair.

"Since then have I journeyed fast and fain
In very despite of Fate,
Lest Hope might still be found in God's
will:
But they drove me from thy gate.

"For every man on God's ground, O King,
His death grows up from his birth
In a shadow-plant perpetually;
And thine towers high, a black yew-tree,
O'er the Charterhouse of Perth!"

That room was built far out from the
house:
And none but we in the room
Might hear the voice that rose beneath,
Nor the tread of the coming doom.

For now there came a torchlight-glare,
And a clang of arms there came;
And not a soul in that space but thought
Of the foe Sir Robert Græme.

Yea, from the country of the Wild Scots,
O'er mountain, valley, and glen,
He had brought with him in murderous
league
Three hundred armed men.

The King knew all in an instant's flash,
And like a King did he stand;
But there was no armor in all the room,
Nor weapon lay to his hand.

And all we women flew to the door
And thought to have made it fast;
But the bolts were gone and the bars were
gone
And the locks were riven and brast.

And he caught the pale pale Queen in his
arms
As the iron footsteps fell,—
Then loosed her, standing alone, and said,
"Our bliss was our farewell!"

And 'twixt his lips he murmured a prayer,
And he crossed his brow and breast;
And proudly in royal hardihood
Even so with folded arms he stood,—
The prize of the bloody quest.

Then on me leaped the Queen like a deer:—
"O Catherine, help!" she cried.
And low at his feet we clasped his knees
Together side by side.
"Oh! even a King, for his people's sake,
From treasonous death must hide!"

"For *her* sake most!" I cried, and I marked
The pang that my words could wring.
And the iron tongs from the chimney-nook
I snatched and held to the King:—
"Wrench up the plank! and the vault be-
neath
Shall yield safe harboring."

With brows low-bent, from my eager hand
The heavy heft did he take;
And the plank at his feet he wrenched and
tore;
And as he frowned through the open floor,
Again I said, "For her sake!"

Then he cried to the Queen, "God's will
be done!"
For her hands were clasped in prayer.
And down he sprang to the inner crypt;
And straight we closed the plank he had
ripp'd
And toiled to smoothe it fair.

(Alas! in that vault a gap once was
Wherethro' the King might have fled;
But three days since close-walled had it
been
By his will; for the ball would roll therein
When without at the palm he play'd.)

Then the Queen cried, "Catherine, keep
the door
And I to this will suffice!"
At her word I rose all dazed to my feet,
And my heart was fire and ice.

And louder ever the voices grew,
And the tramp of men in mail;
Until to my brain it seemed to be
As though I tossed on a ship at sea
In the teeth of a crashing gale.

Then back I flew to the rest; and hard
We strove with sinews knit
To force the table against the door;
But we might not compass it.

Then my wild gaze sped far down the hall
To the place of the hearthstone-sill;
And the Queen bent ever above the floor,
For the plank was rising still.

And now the rush was heard on the stair,
And "God, what help?" was our cry.
And was I frenzied or was I bold?
I looked at each empty stanchion-hold,
And no bar but my arm had I!

Like iron felt my arm, as through
 The staple I made it pass:—
 Alack! it was flesh and bone—no more!
 'T was Catherine Douglas sprang to the
 door,

But I fell back Kate Barlass.

With that they all thronged into the hall,
 Half dim to my failing ken;
 And the space that was but a void before
 Was a crowd of wrathful men.

Behind the door I had fall'n and lay,
 Yet my sense was wildly aware,
 And for all the pain of my shattered arm
 I never fainted there.

Even as I fell, my eyes were cast
 Where the King leaped down to the pit;
 And lo! the plank was smooth in its place,
 And the Queen stood far from it.

And under the litters and through the bed
 And within the presses all
 The traitors sought for the King, and
 pierced
 The arras around the wall.

And through the chamber they ramped and
 stormed
 Like lions loose in the lair,
 And scarce could trust to their very eyes,—
 For behold! no King was there.

Then one of them seized the Queen, and
 cried,—
 "Now tell us, where is thy lord?"
 And he held the sharp point over her heart:
 She drooped not her eyes nor did she start,
 But she answered never a word.

Then the sword half pierced the true true
 breast:
 But it was the Græme's own son
 Cried, "This is a woman,—we seek a man!"
 And away from her girdle-zone
 He struck the point of the murderous steel;
 And that foul deed was not done.

And forth flowed all the throng like a sea,
 And 't was empty space once more;
 And my eyes sought out the wounded Queen
 As I lay behind the door.

And I said: "Dear Lady, leave me here,
 For I cannot help you now;
 But fly while you may, and none shall reck
 Of my place here lying low."

And she said, "My Catherine, God help
 thee!"

Then she looked to the distant floor,
 And clasping her hands, "O God help *him*,"
 She sobbed, "for we can no more!"

But God He knows what help may mean,
 If it mean to live or to die;
 And what sore sorrow and mighty moan
 On earth it may cost ere yet a throne
 Be filled in His house on high.

And now the ladies fled with the Queen;
 And through the open door
 The night-wind wailed round the empty
 room
 And the rushes shook on the floor.

And the bed drooped low in the dark recess
 Whence the arras was rent away;
 And the firelight still shone over the space
 Where our hidden secret lay.

And the rain had ceased, and the moon-
 beams lit
 The window high in the wall,—
 Bright beams that on the plank that I
 knew
 Through the painted pane did fall
 And gleamed with the splendor of Scot-
 land's crown
 And shield armorial.

But then a great wind swept up the skies,
 And the climbing moon fell back;
 And the royal blazon fled from the floor,
 And nought remained on its track;
 And high in the darkened window-pane
 The shield and the crown were black.

And what I say next I partly saw
 And partly I heard in sooth,
 And partly since from the murderers' lips
 The torture wrung the truth.

For now again came the armèd tread,
 And fast through the hall it fell;
 But the throng was less: and ere I saw,
 By the voice without I could tell
 That Robert Stuart had come with them
 Who knew that chamber well.

And over the space the Græme strode dark
 With his mantle round him flung;
 And in his eye was a flaming light
 But not a word on his tongue.

And Stuart held a torch to the floor,
 And he found the thing he sought;
 And they slashed the plank away with their
 swords;
 And O God! I fainted not!

And the traitor held his torch in the gap,
 All smoking and smouldering;
 And through the vapor and fire, beneath
 In the dark crypt's narrow ring,
 With a shout that pealed to the room's
 high roof
 They saw their naked King.

Half naked he stood, but stood as one
 Who yet could do and dare;
 With the crown, the King was stript away,—
 The Knight was reft of his battle-array,—
 But still the Man was there.

From the rout then stepped a villain forth,—
 Sir John Hall was his name;
 With a knife unsheathed he leapt to the vault
 Beneath the torchlight-flame.

Of his person and stature was the King
 A man right manly strong,
 And mightily by the shoulder-blades
 His foe to his feet he flung.

Then the traitor's brother, Sir Thomas Hall,
 Sprang down to work his worst;
 And the King caught the second man by the neck
 And flung him above the first.

And he smote and trampled them under him;
 And a long month thence they bare
 All black their throats with the grip of his hands
 When the hangman's hand came there.

And sore he strove to have had their knives,
 But the sharp blades gashed his hands.
 Oh James! so armed, thou hadst battled there
 Till help had come of thy bands;
 And oh! once more thou hadst held our throne
 And ruled thy Scottish lands!

But while the King o'er his foes still raged
 With a heart that naught could tame,
 Another man sprang down to the crypt;
 And with his sword in his hand hard-gripp'd,
 There stood Sir Robert Græme.

(Now shame on the recreant traitor's heart
 Who durst not face his King
 Till the body unarmed was wearied out
 With two-fold combating!

Ah! well might the people sing and say,
 As oft ye have heard aright:—
*"O Robert Græme, O Robert Græme,
 Who slew our King, God give thee shame!"*
 For he slew him not as a knight.)

And the naked King turned round at bay,
 But his strength had passed the goal,
 And he could but gasp:—"Mine hour is come;
 But oh! to succor thine own soul's doom,
 Let a priest now shrive my soul!"

And the traitor looked on the King's spent strength

And said:—"Have I kept my word?—
 Yea, King, the mortal pledge that I gave?
 No black friar's shrift thy soul shall save,
 But the shrift of this red sword!"

With that he smote his King through the breast;

And all they three in the pen
 Fell on him and stabbed and stabbed him there

Like merciless murderous men.

Yet seemed it now that Sir Robert Græme,
 Ere the King's last breath was o'er,
 Turned sick at heart with the deadly sight
 And would have done no more.

But a cry came from the troop above:—
 "If him thou do not slay,
 The price of his life that thou dost spare
 Thy forfeit life shall pay!"

O God! what more did I hear or see,
 Or how should I tell the rest?
 But there at length our King lay slain
 With sixteen wounds in his breast.

O God! and now did a bell boom forth;
 And the murderers turned and fled;—
 Too late, too late, O God, did it sound!—
 And I heard the true men mustering round.
 And the cries and the coming tread.

But ere they came, to the black death-gap
 Somewise did I creep and steal;
 And lo! or ever I swooned away,
 Through the dusk I saw where the white face lay
 In the Pit of Fortune's Wheel.

And now, ye Scottish maids who have heard

Dread things of the days grown old,—
 Even at the last, of true Queen Jane
 May somewhat yet be told,
 And how she dealt for her dear lord's sake
 Dire vengeance manifold.

'T was in the Charterhouse of Perth,
 In the fair-lit Death-chapelle,
 That the slain King's corpse on bier was laid
 With chaunt and requiem-knell.

And all with royal wealth of balm
 Was the body purified;
 And none could trace on the brow and lips
 The death that he had died.

In his robes of state he lay asleep
 With orb and sceptre in hand;
 And by the crown he wore on his throne
 Was his kingly forehead spann'd.

And, girls, 't was a sweet sad thing to see
 How the curling golden hair,
 As in the day of the poet's youth,
 From the King's crown clustered there.

And if all had come to pass in the brain
 That throbbed beneath those curls,
 Then Scots had said in the days to come
 That this their soil was a different home
 And a different Scotland, girls!

And the Queen sat by him night and day,
 And oft she knelt in prayer,
 All wan and pale in the widow's veil
 That shrouded her shining hair.

And I had got good help of my hurt:
 And only to me some sign
 She made; and save the priests that were
 there
 No face would she see but mine.

And the month of March wore on apace;
 And now fresh couriers fared
 Still from the country of the Wild 'Scots
 With news of the traitors snared.

And still as I told her day by day,
 Her pallor changed to sight,
 And the frost grew to a furnace-flame
 That burnt her visage white.

And evermore as I brought her word,
 She bent to her dead King James,
 And in the cold ear with fire-drawn breath
 She spoke the traitors' names.

But when the name of Sir Robert Græme
 Was the one she had to give,
 I ran to hold her up from the floor;
 For the froth was on her lips, and sore
 I feared that she could not live,

And the month of March wore nigh to its
 end,
 And still was the death-pall spread;
 For she would not bury her slaughtered
 lord
 Till his slayers all were dead.

And now of their dooms dread tidings
 came,
 And of torments fierce and dire;
 And nought she spake,—she had ceased
 to speak,—
 But her eyes were a soul on fire.

But when I told her the bitter end
 Of the stern and just award,
 She leaned o'er the bier, and thrice three
 times
 She kissed the lips of her lord.

And then she said,—“My King, they are
 dead!”
 And she knelt on the chapel-floor,
 And whispered low with a strange proud
 smile,—
 “James, James, they suffered more!”

Last she stood up to her queenly height,
 But she shook like an autumn leaf,
 As though the fire wherein she burned
 Then left her body, and all were turned
 To winter of life-long grief.

And “O James!” she said,—“My James!”
 she said,—
 “Alas for the woful thing,
 That a poet true and a friend of man,
 In desperate days of bale and ban,
 Should needs be born a King!”

WILLIAM MORRIS

(1834-1896)

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

[1858.]

My time
BUT, knowing now that they would have
her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her
brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her
cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful
blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but
shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek
burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her
head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last
and said:
'O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and
dead.

'God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right such great
lords — still

'Listen, suppose your time were come to
die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

'The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running
well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one
speak:

"One of these cloths is heaven, and one
is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they
be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow
tell

"Of your own strength and mightiness;
here, see!"
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your
eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

'A great God's angel standing, with such
dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings,
and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner
skies

'Showing him well, and making his com-
mands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover,
too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on
wands;

'And one of these strange choosing cloths
was blue,
'Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

'After a shivering half-hour you said,
"God help! heaven's colour, the blue;" and
he said, "hell."
Perhaps you then would roll upon your
bed,

'And cry to all good men that loved you
well,
"Ah Christ! if only I had known, known,
known;"

Launcelot went away, then I could tell,
'Like wisest man how all things would be,
moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was
sown.

'Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through
these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you
lie.'

Her voice was low at first, being full of
tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and
shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,
A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice
sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,
Though still she stood right up, and never
shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have
drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung
her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of
shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

'It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-
time—
This happened; when the heralds sung his
name,

"Son of King Ban of Benwick," seemed
to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of
rhyme.

'Christmas and whitened winter passed
away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds,
yea

'And in the Summer I grew white with
flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and
the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the
same,

'However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and
I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick,
tick,

'To my unhappy pulse, that beat right
through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

'Seemed cold and shallow without any
cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were
brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts
would crowd,

'Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

'That which I deemed would ever round me
move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove
'Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the
Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy
and good?

I love God now a little, if this cord
'Were broken, once for all what striving
could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

'Slip slowly down some path worn smooth
and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping was there some small
leaven

'Of stretched hands catching small stones
by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head
lay

'Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all
past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'er-
cast

'In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

'From out my memory; I hear thrushes
sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most
fresh sting;

'I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

'I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with
the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

'Yea right through to my heart, grown very
shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made
me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

'A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

'Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd
fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see
quite through,

'There, see you, where the soft still light
yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have
done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted
singers,

'And startling green drawn upward by the
sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my
hair,
And tranced stood watching the west
wind run

'With faintest half-heard breathing sound
— why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen— In that garden fair

'Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the
kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring
day,
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

'When both our mouths went wandering in
one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far
away.

'Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now; so
nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

'Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those
years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you
lie.

'Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinn'd this way, straight her con-
science sears;

'And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lov-
ingly.

'Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in
your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother
sleeps,

'Buried in some place far down in the
south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

'Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow.
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds
blow

'Through half your castle-locks! let me not
shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

'Let not my rusting tears make your sword
light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

'So— let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I
say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men
know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one
day,

'One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*, for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknighly outrage;
though

'You, Gauwaine, held his word without a
flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my
bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any
law

'To make a queen say why some spots of
red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
"Your hands are white, lady, as when you
wed,

"Where did you bleed?" and must I
stammer out—"Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there
lay

"A knife-point last night:" so must I
defend
The honour of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should
end

'This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white
fear

'Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did
dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and
said,

"Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!

"Setter of traps, I pray you guard your
head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you.
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels
lead

"For driving weight; hurrah now! draw
and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my
breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so."

'He struck his hands together o'er the
beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovell'd at his
feet,
And groan'd at being slain so young—"at
least."

'My knight said, "Rise you, sir, who are so
fleet

At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!" then I weet,

'Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great
delight

Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

'Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

'The fight began, and to me they drew
nigh;

Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

'And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my
knight

Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the
fight.

'Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should
stand,

'And burn, against the heat, would quiver
so,

Yards above my head; thus these matters
went;

Which things were only warnings of the
woe

'That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was
shent,

For Mellyagraunce had fought against the
Lord;

Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be
blent

'With all this wickedness; say no rash
word

Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to grey, may bring some
sword

'To drown you in your blood; see my
breast rise,

Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful
wise,

'Yea also at my full heart's strong com-
mand,

See through my long throat how the words
go up

In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

'The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colour'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

'And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my
brow,

'To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie
there

'For ever? am I not a gracious proof—
"But in your chamber Launcelot was
found"—

Is there a good knight then would stand
aloof,

'When a queen says with gentle queenly
sound:

"O true as steel come now and talk with
me,

I love to see your step upon the ground

"Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face,
and hear

Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

"The thing they seem to mean: good
friend, so dear

To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and
drear;

"If you come not, I fear this time I
might

Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in
sight;

"For no man cares now to know why I
sigh;

And no man comes to sing me pleasant
songs,

Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that
lie

"So thick in the gardens; therefore one so
long

To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all
wrongs

"Just for one night." Did he not come
to me?

What thing could keep true Launcelot
away

If I said "come"? there was one less than
three

'In my quiet room that night, and we were
gay;

Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and
sick,

Because a bawling broke our dream up,
yea

'I looked at Launcelot's face and could not
 speak,
 For he looked helpless too, for a little
 while;
 Then I remember how I tried to shriek,
 'And could not, but fell down; from tile
 to tile
 The stones they threw up rattled o'er my
 head,
 And made me dizzier; till within a while
 'My maids were all about me, and my head
 On Launcelot's breast was being soothed
 away
 From its white chattering, until Launcelot
 said —
 'By God! I will not tell you more to-
 day,
 Judge any way you will — what matters it?
 You know quite well the story of that
 fray,
 'How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the
 mad fit
 That caught up Gauwaine — all, all, verily,
 But just that which would save me; these
 things flit.
 'Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
 Whatever may have happen'd these long
 years,
 God knows I speak truth, saying that you
 lie!
 'All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear
 tears.'
 She would not speak another word, but
 stood
 Turn'd sideways; listening, like a man who
 hears
 His brother's trumpet sounding through the
 wood
 Of his foes' lances. She lean'd eagerly.
 And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she
 could
 At last hear something really; joyfully
 Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong
 speed
 Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
 The knight who came was Launcelot at
 good need.

THE CHAPEL IN LYONESS

[First published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, September 1856. Reprinted 1858.]

SIR OZANA LE CURE HARDY. SIR GALAHAD.
 SIR BORS DE GANYS

SIR OZANA

ALL day long and every day,
 From Christmas-Eve to Whit-Sunday,
 Within that Chapel-aisle I lay,
 And no man came a-near.

Naked to the waist was I,
 And deep within my breast did lie,
 Though no man any blood could spy,
 The truncheon of a spear.

No meat did ever pass my lips.
 Those days — (Alas! the sunlight slips
 From off the gilded parclose, dips,
 And night comes on apace.)

My arms lay back behind my head;
 Over my raised-up knees was spread
 A samite cloth of white and red;
 A rose lay on my face.

Many a time I tried to shout;
 But as in dream of battle-rout,
 My frozen speech would not well out;
 I could not even weep.

With inward sigh I see the sun
 Fade off the pillars one by one,
 My heart faints when the day is done,
 Because I cannot sleep.

Sometimes strange thoughts pass through
 my head;

Not like a tomb is this my bed,
 Yet oft I think that I am dead;
 That round my tomb is writ,

'Ozana of the hardy heart,
 Knight of the Table Round,
 Pray for his soul, lords, of your part;
 A true knight he was found.'

Ah! me, I cannot fathom it. [*He sleeps.*]

SIR GALAHAD

All day long and every day,
 Till his madness pass'd away,
 I watch'd Ozana as he lay
 Within the gilded screen.

All my singing moved him not;
 As I sung my heart grew hot,
 With the thought of Launcelot
 Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space
 From out the chapel, bathed my face
 In the stream that runs apace
 By the churchyard wall.

There I pluck'd a faint wild rose,
 Hard by where the linden grows
 Sighing over silver rows
 Of the lilies tall.

I laid the flower across his mouth;
 The sparkling drops seem'd good for
 drouth;
 He smiled, turn'd round toward the south,
 Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west:
He drew the covering from his breast,
Against his heart that hair he prest;
Death him soon will bless.

SIR BORS

I enter'd by the western door;
I saw a knight's helm lying there:
I raised my eyes from off the floor,
And caught the gleaming of his hair.

I stept full softly up to him;
I laid my chin upon his head;
I felt him smile; my eyes did swim,
I was so glad he was not dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low,
'There comes no sleep nor any love.'
But Galahad stoop'd and kiss'd his brow:
He shiver'd; I saw his pale lips move.

SIR OZANA

There comes no sleep nor any love;
Ah me! I shiver with delight.
I am so weak I cannot move;
God move me to thee, dear, to-night!
Christ help! I have but little wit:
My life went wrong; I see it writ,

'Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;
A good knight he was found.'
Now I begin to fathom it.

[*He dies.*]

SIR BORS

Galahad sits dreamily:
What strange things may his eyes see,
Great blue eyes fix'd full on me?
On his soul, Lord, have mercy.

SIR GALAHAD

Ozana, shall I pray for thee?
Her cheek is laid to thine;
No long time hence, also I see
Thy wasted fingers twine

Within the tresses of her hair
That shineth gloriously,
Thinly outspread in the clear air
Against the jasper sea.

CONCERNING GEFFRAY TESTE
NOIRE

[1858.]

AND if you meet the Canon of Chimay,
As going to Ortaise you well may do,
Greet him from John of Castel Neuf, and
say,
All that I tell you, for all this is true.

This Geffray Teste Noire was a Gascon
thief,
Who, under shadow of the English
name,
Pilled all such towns and countries as were
lief
To King Charles and St. Dennis; thought
it blame

If anything escaped him; so my lord,
The Duke of Berry, sent Sir John Bonne
Lance,
And other knights, good players with the
sword,
To check this thief, and give the land a
chance.

Therefore we set our bastides round the
tower
That Geffray held, the strong thief! like a
king,
High perch'd upon the rock of Veritadour,
Hopelessly strong by Christ! it was mid
spring,

When first I joined the little army there
With ten good spears; Auvergne is hot,
each day
We sweated armed before the barrier,
Good feats of arms were done there
often — eh?

Your brother was slain there? I mind me
now,
A right good man-at-arms, God pardon
him!
I think 'twas Geffray smote him on the
brow
With some spiked axe, and while he tot-
ter'd, dim

About the eyes, the spear of Alleyne Roux
Slipped through his camaille and his
throat; well, well!

Alleyne is paid now; your name Alleyne
too?

Mary! how strange — but this tale I
would tell —

For spite of all our bastides, damned
Blackhead

Would ride abroad whene'er he chose to
ride,

We could not stop him; many a burgher
bled

Dear gold all around his girdle; far and
wide

The villaynes dwelt in utter misery

'Twixt us and thief Sir Geffray; hauled
this way

By Sir Bonne Lance at one time, he gone
by,

Down comes this Teste Noire on another
day.

And therefore they dig up the stone, grind
corn,
Hew wood, draw water, yea, they lived,
in short,
As I said just now, utterly forlorn,
Till this our knave and blackhead was
outfought.

So Bonne Lance fretted, thinking of some
trap
Day after day, till on a time he said;
'John of Newcastle, if we have good hap,
We catch our thief in two days.' 'How?'
I said.

'Why, Sir, to-day he rideth out again,
Hoping to take well certain sumpter
mules
From Carcassonne, going with little train,
Because, forsooth, he thinketh us mere
fools;

'But if we set an ambush in some wood,
He is but dead; so, Sir, take thirty spears
To Verville forest, if it seem you good.'
Then felt I like the horse in Job, who
hears

The dancing trumpet sound, and we went
forth;
And my red lion on the spear-head
flapped,
As faster than the cool wind we rode North,
Towards the wood of Verville; thus it
happed.

We rode a soft space on that day while
spies
Got news about Sir Geffray; the red wine
Under the road-side bush was clear; the
flies,
The dragon-flies I mind me most, did
shine

In brighter arms than ever I put on;
So—'Geffray,' said our spies, 'would pass
that way
Next day at sundown;' then he must be
won;
And so we enter'd Verville wood next
day,

In the afternoon; through it the highway
runs,
'Twixt copses of green hazel, very thick,
And underneath, with glimmering of suns,
The primroses are happy; the dews lick

The soft green moss. 'Put cloths about
your arms
Lest they should glitter; surely they will
go

In a long thin line, watchful for alarms,
With all their carriages of booty, so—

'Lay down my pennon in the grass—Lord
God!
What have we lying here? will they be
cold,
I wonder, being so bare, above the sod,
Instead of under? This was a knight
too, fold

'Lying on fold of ancient rusted mail;
No plate at all, gold rowels to the spurs,
And see the quiet gleam of turquoise pale
Along the ceinture; but the long time
blurs

'Even the tinder of his coat to nought,
Except these scraps of leather; see how
white
The skull is, loose within the coif! He
fought
A good fight, maybe, ere he was slain
quite.

'No armour on the legs too; strange in
faith—
A little skeleton for a knight though—ah!
This one is bigger, truly without scathe
His enemies escaped not—ribs driven
out far,—

'That must have reach'd the heart, I doubt
—how now,
What say you, Aldovrand—a woman?
why?'

'Under the coif a gold wreath on the brow,
Yea, see the hair not gone to powder, lie,

'Golden, no doubt, once—yea, and very
small—
This for a knight; but for a dame, my
lord,
These loose-hung bones seem shapely still,
and tall,—
Didst ever see a woman's bones, my
lord?'

Often, God help me! I remember when
I was a simple boy, fifteen years old,
The Jacquerie froze up the blood of men
With their fell deeds, not fit now to be
told:

God help again! we enter'd Beauvais town,
Slaying them fast, whereto I help'd, mere
boy
As I was then; we gentles cut them down,
These burners and defilers, with great joy.

Reason for that, too, in the great church
there
These fiends had lit a fire, that soon went
out,
The church at Beauvais being so great and
fair—
My father, who was by me, gave a shout

Between a beast's howl and a woman's
scream,
Then, panting, chuckled to me: 'John,
look! look!
Count the dames' skeletons!' From some
bad dream
Like a man just awaked, my father
shook;

And I, being faint with smelling the burnt
bones,
And very hot with fighting down the
street,
And sick of such a life, fell down, with
groans
My head went weakly nodding to my
feet. —

—An arrow had gone through her tender
throat,
And her right wrist was broken; then I
saw
The reason why she had on that war-
coat,
Their story came out clear without a
flaw;

For when he knew that they were being
waylaid,
He threw it over her, yea, hood and all;
Whereby he was much hack'd, while they
were stay'd
By those their murderers; many an one
did fall

Beneath his arm, no doubt, so that he
clear'd
Their circle, bore his death-wound out of
it;
But as they rode, some archer least afraid
Drew a strong bow, and thereby she was
hit.

Still as he rode he knew not she was
dead,
Thought her but fainted from her broken
wrist,
He bound with his great leathern belt —
she bled?
Who knows! he bled too, neither was
there miss'd

The beating of her heart, his heart beat
well
For both of them, till here, within this
wood,
He died scarce sorry; easy this to tell;
After these years the flowers forget their
blood. —

How could it be? never before that day,
However much a soldier I might be,
Could I look on a skeleton and say
I care not for it, shudder not — now
see,

Over those bones I sat and pored for
hours,
And thought, and dream'd, and still I
scarce could see
The small white bones that lay upon the
flowers,
But evermore I saw the lady; she

With her dear gentle walking leading in,
By a chain of silver twined about her
wrists,
Her loving knight, mounted and arm'd to
win
Great honour for her, fighting in the
lists.

O most pale face, that brings such joy and
sorrow
Into men's hearts — yea, too, so piercing
sharp
That joy is, that it marcheth nigh to sor-
row
For ever — like an overwinded harp.

Your face must hurt me always; pray you
now,
Doth it not hurt you too? seemeth some
pain
To hold you always, pain to hold your
brow
So smooth, unwrinkled ever; yea again,

Your long eyes where the lids seem like to
drop,
Would you not, lady, were they shut fast,
feel
Far merrier? there so high they will not
stop,
They are most sly to glide forth and to
steal

Into my heart; *I kiss their soft lids there,
And in green garden scarce can stop
my lips
From wandering on your face, but that
your hair
Falls down and tangles me, back my face
slips.*

Or say your mouth — I saw you drink red
wine
Once at a feast; how slowly it sank in,
As though you fear'd that some wild fate
might twine
Within that cup, and slay you for a sin

And when you talk your lips do arch and
move
In such wise that a language new I
know
Besides their sound; they quiver, too, with
love
When you are standing silent; know this,
too,

I saw you kissing once, like a curved sword
 That bites with all its edge, did your lips
 lie,
 Curled gently, slowly, long time could
 afford
 For caught-up breathings; like a dying
 sigh
 They gather'd up their lines and went
 away.
 And still kept twitching with a sort of
 smile,
 As likely to be weeping presently,—
 Your hands too—how I watch'd them
 all the while!

'Cry out St. Peter now,' quoth Aldovrand;
 I cried, 'St. Peter,' broke out from the
 wood
 With all my spears; we met them hand to
 hand,
 And shortly slew them; nathless, by the
 rood,
 We caught not Blackhead then, or any
 day;
 Months after that he died at last in bed,
 From a wound pick'd up at a barrier-fray;
 That same year's end a steel bolt in the
 head,
 And much bad living kill'd Teste Noire at
 last;
 John Froissart knoweth he is dead by
 now,
 No doubt, but knoweth not this tale just
 past;
 Perchance then you can tell him what
 I show.

In my new castle, down beside the Eure,
 There is a little chapel of squared stone,
 Painted inside and out; in green nook pure
 There did I lay them, every wearied
 bone;
 And over it they lay, with stone-white
 hands
 Clasped fast together, hair made bright
 with gold
 This Jaques Picard, known through many
 lands,
 Wrought cunningly; he's dead now—I
 am old.

OLD LOVE

[1858.]

'You must be very old, Sir Giles,'
 I said; he said: 'Yea, very old.'
 Whereat the mournfullest of smiles
 Creased his dry skin with many a fold.
 'They hammer'd out my basnet point
 Into a round salade,' he said,
 'The basnet being quite out of joint,
 Nathless the salade rasps my head.'

He gazed at the great fire awhile:
 'And you are getting old, Sir John,'
 (He said this with that cunning smile
 That was most sad;) 'we both wear on,
 'Knights come to court and look at me,
 With eyebrows up, except my lord,
 And my dear lady, none I see
 That know the ways of my old sword.'
 (My lady! at that word no pang
 Stopp'd all my blood.) 'But tell me,
 John,
 Is it quite true that pagans hang
 So thick about the east, that on
 'The eastern sea no Venice flag
 Can fly unpaid for?' 'True,' I said,
 'And in such way the miscreants drag
 Christ's cross upon the ground, I dread
 'That Constantine must fall this year.'
 Within my heart; 'These things are
 small;
 This is not small, that things outwear
 I thought were made for ever, yea, all,
 'All things go soon or late,' I said—
 I saw the duke in court next day;
 Just as before, his grand great head
 Above his gold robes dreaming lay,
 Only his face was paler; there
 I saw his duchess sit by him;
 And she—she was changed more; her hair
 Before my eyes that used to swim,
 And make me dizzy with great bliss
 Once, when I used to watch her sit—
 Her hair is bright still, yet it is
 As though some dust were thrown on it.
 Her eyes are shallower, as though
 Some grey glass were behind; her brow
 And cheeks the straining bones show
 through,
 Are not so good for kissing now.
 Her lips are drier now she is
 A great duke's wife these many years,
 They will not shudder with a kiss
 As once they did, being moist with tears.
 Also her hands have lost that way
 Of clinging that they used to have;
 They look'd quite easy, as they lay
 Upon the silken cushions brave
 With broidery of the apples green
 My Lord Duke bears upon his shield.
 Her face, alas! that I have seen
 Look fresher than an April field,
 This is all gone now; gone also
 Her tender walking; when she walks
 She is most queenly I well know,
 And she is fair still;—as the stalks

Of faded summer-lilies are,
So is she grown now unto me
This spring-time, when the flowers star
The meadows, birds sing wonderfully.

I warrant once she used to cling
About his neck, and kiss'd him so,
And then his coming step would ring
Joy-bells for her,—some time ago.

Ah! sometimes like an idle dream
That hinders true life overmuch,
Sometimes like a lost heaven, these seem.
This love is not so hard to smutch.

THE GILLIFLOWER OF GOLD

[1858.]

A GOLDEN gilliflower to-day
I wore upon my helm alway,
And won the prize of this tourney.

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

However well Sir Giles might sit,
His sun was weak to wither it,
Lord Miles's blood was dew on it:

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Although my spear in splinters flew,
From John's steel-coat my eye was true;
I wheel'd about, and cried for you,

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Yea, do not doubt my heart was good,
Though my sword flew like rotten wood,
To shout, although I scarcely stood,

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

My hand was steady too, to take
My axe from round my neck, and break
John's steel-coat up for my love's sake.

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

When I stood in my tent again,
Arming afresh, I felt a pain
Take hold of me, I was so fain—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

To hear: '*Honneur aux fils des preux!*'
Right in my ears again, and shew
The gilliflower blossom'd new.

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

The Sieur Guillaume against me came,
His tabard bore three points of flame
From a red heart: with little blame—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Our tough spears crackled up like straw;
He was the first to turn and draw
His sword, that had nor speck nor flaw,—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

But I felt weaker than a maid,
And my brain, dizzied and afraid,
Within my helm a fierce tune play'd,—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Until I thought of your dear head,
Bow'd to the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red;—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Crash! how the swords met, '*giroflée!*'
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
'*La belle! la belle! jaune giroflée!*'

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Once more the great swords met again,
'*La belle! la belle!*' but who fell then?
Le Sieur Guillaume, who struck down

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

And as with mazed and unarm'd face,
Toward my own crown and the Queen's
place,

They led me at a gentle pace—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

I almost saw your quiet head
Bow'd o'er the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red—

Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

SHAMEFUL DEATH

[1858.]

THERE were four of us about that bed;
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
Over his feet lay the bride;
We were quite sure that he was dead,
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
His spirit pass'd away,
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
And the trees were merely grey.

He was not slain with the sword,
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word
After he came in here;
I cut away the cord
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
For the recreants came behind,
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
And my hair is all turn'd grey,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the
fen,
Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE SAILING OF THE SWORD

[1858.]

ACROSS the empty garden-beds,
When the Sword went out to sea,
I scarcely saw my sisters' heads
Bowed each beside a tree.
I could not see the castle leads,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Alicia wore a scarlet gown,
When the Sword went out to sea,
But Ursula's was russet brown:
For the mist we could not see
The scarlet roofs of the good town,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Green holly in Alicia's hand,
When the Sword went out to sea;
With sere oak-leaves did Ursula stand;
O! yet alas for me!
I did but bear a peel'd white wand,
When the Sword went out to sea.

O, russet brown and scarlet bright,
When the Sword went out to sea,
My sisters wore; I wore but white:
Red, brown, and white, are three;
Three damozels; each had a knight,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Sir Robert shouted loud, and said,
When the Sword went out to sea,
'Alicia, while I see thy head,
What shall I bring for thee?'
'O, my sweet lord, a ruby red.'
The Sword went out to sea.

Sir Miles said, while the sails hung down,
When the Sword went out to sea,
'Oh, Ursula! while I see the town,
What shall I bring for thee?'
'Dear knight, bring back a falcon brown.'
The Sword went out to sea.

But my Roland, no word he said
When the Sword went out to sea,
But only turn'd away his head,—
A quick shriek came from me:
'Come back, dear lord, to your white
maid;'—

The Sword went out to sea.

The hot sun bit the garden-beds,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Beneath an apple-tree our heads
Stretched out toward the sea;
Grey gleam'd the thirsty castle-leads,
When the Sword came back from sea.

Lord Robert brought a ruby red,
When the Sword came back from sea;
He kissed Alicia on the head:
'I am come back to thee;
'Tis time, sweet love, that we were wed,
Now the Sword is back from sea!

Sir Miles he bore a falcon brown,
When the Sword came back from sea;
His arms went round tall Ursula's gown,—
'What joy, O love, but thee?
Let us be wed in the good town,
Now the Sword is back from sea!

My heart grew sick, no more afraid,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Upon the deck a tall white maid
Sat on Lord Roland's knee;
His chin was press'd upon her head,
When the Sword came back from sea!

THE WIND

[1858.]

Ah! no; no, it is nothing, surely nothing
at all,
Only the wild-going wind round by the
garden-wall,
For the dawn just now is breaking, the
wind beginning to fall.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.

So I will sit, and think and think of the
days gone by,
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs
should cry,
Making no noise at all while the flambeau
burns awry.
For my chair is heavy and carved, and
with sweeping green behind
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin
out in the gusts of the wind;
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep
gash cut in the rind.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.

If I move my chair it will scream, and the
orange will roll out far,
And the faint yellow juice ooze out like
blood from a wizard's jar;
And the dogs will howl for those who went
last month to the war.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

So I will sit and think of love that is over
and past,

O! so long ago—yes, I will be quiet at
last;

Whether I like it or not, a grim half-slum-
ber is cast

Over my worn old brains, that touches the
roots of my heart,

And above my half-shut eyes the blue roof
'gins to part,

And show the blue spring sky, till I am
ready to start

From out of the green-hung chair; but
something keeps me still,

And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with
her on the side of a hill,

Dotted—for was it not spring?—with
tufts of the daffodil.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted
book in her hand;

Her finger kept the place; I caught her, we
both did stand

Face to face, on the top of the highest hill
in the land.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

I held to her long bare arms, but she shud-
der'd away from me,

While the flush went out of her face as
her head fell back on a tree,

And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful
for me to see;

And still I held to her arms till her shoul-
der touch'd my mail.

Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that
I should prevail,

And her hair went over my robe, like a
gold flag over a sail.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd
me on the brow,

And then lay down on the grass, where
the mark on the moss is now,

And spread her arms out wide while I
went down below.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro
on the side of the hill,

Till I gather'd and held in my arms great
sheaves of the daffodil,

And when I came again my Margaret lay
there still.

I piled them high and high above her heav-
ing breast,

How they were caught and held in her
loose ungirded vest!

But one beneath her arm died, happy so to
be prest!

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

Again I turn'd my back and went away for
an hour;

She said no word when I came again, so,
flower by flower,

I counted the daffodils over, and cast them
languidly lower.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

My dry hands shook and shook as the
green gown show'd again,

Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew
hollow with pain,

And on to us both there fell from the
sun-shower drops of rain.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.*

Alas! alas! there was blood on the very
quiet breast,

Blood lay in the many folds of the loose
ungirded vest,

Blood lay upon her arm where the flower
had been prest.

I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and
the orange roll'd out far,

The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood
from a wizard's jar;

And then in march'd the ghosts of those
that had gone to the war.

I knew them by the arms that I was used
to paint
Upon their long thin shields; but the colours
were all grown faint,
And faint upon their banner was Olaf,
king and saint.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to
find.

THE BLUE CLOSET

[1858.]

THE DAMOZELS

LADY ALICE, Lady Louise,
Between the wash of the tumbling seas
We are ready to sing, if so ye please;
So lay your long hands on the keys;
Sing, 'Laudate pueri.'

And ever the great bell overhead
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the
dead.

LADY LOUISE

Sister, let the measure swell
Not too loud; for you sing not well
If you drown the faint boom of the bell;
He is weary, so am I.

And ever the chevron overhead
Flapp'd on the banner of the dead;
(Was he asleep, or was he dead?)

LADY ALICE

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,
Two damozels wearing purple and green,
Four lone ladies dwelling here
From day to day and year to year;
And there is none to let us go;
To break the locks of the doors below,
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow;
And when we die no man will know
That we are dead; but they give us leave,
Once every year on Christmas-eve,
To sing in the Closet Blue one song;
And we should be so long, so long,
If we dared, in singing; for dream on
dream,
They float on in a happy stream;
Float from the gold strings, float from the
keys,
Float from the open'd lips of Louise;
But, alas! the sea-salt oozes through
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue;
And ever the great bell overhead
Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.

[*They sing all together*]

How long ago was it, how long ago,
He came to this tower with hands full of
snow?

'Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down,'
he said,
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my
head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran
through my hair,
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders
and bare.

'I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,
For my tears are all hidden deep under
the seas;

'In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my
tears,
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old
years;

'Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small
and dry,
I am so feeble now, would I might die.'

And in truth the great bell overhead
Left off his pealing for the dead,
Perchance, because the wind was dead.

Will he come back again, or is he dead?
O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!
Both his soul and his body to me are
most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive
Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-
eve.

Through the floor shot up a lily red,
With a patch of earth from the land of the
dead,
For he was strong in the land of the dead.'

What matter that his cheeks were pale,
His kind kiss'd lips all grey?
'O, love Louise, have you waited long?'
'O, my lord Arthur, yea.'

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek
Was stiff with frozen rime?
His eyes were grown quite blue again,
As in the happy time.

'O, love Louise, this is the key
Of the happy golden land!
O, sisters, cross the bridge with me,
My eyes are full of sand.
What matter that I cannot see,
If ye take me by the hand?'

And ever the great bell overhead,
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the
dead;
For their song ceased, and they were dead.

THE TUNE OF SEVEN TOWERS

[1858.]

No one goes there now:

For what is left to fetch away
From the desolate battlements all arow,
And the lead roof heavy and grey?
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

No one walks there now;

Except in the white moonlight
The white ghosts walk in a row;
If one could see it, an awful sight, —
'Listen!' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

But none can see them now,

Though they sit by the side of the moat,
Feet half in the water, there in a row,
Long hair in the wind afloat.
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

If any will go to it now,

He must go to it all alone,
Its gates will not open to any row
Of glittering spears — will you go alone?
'Listen!' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

By my love go there now,

To fetch me my coif away,
My coif and my kirtle, with pearls arow,
Oliver, go to-day!
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

I am unhappy now,

I cannot tell you why;
If you go, the priests and I in a row
Will pray that you may not die.
'Listen!' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

If you will go for me now,

I will kiss your mouth at last;
[*She sayeth inwardly.*]
(*The graves stand grey in a row,*)
Oliver, hold me fast!
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS

[1858.]

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,

To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.
By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes,
when

There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises;
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which,
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
'Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poitiers where we made them run
So fast — why, sweet my love, good cheer.
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this.'

But, 'O,' she said,
'My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the 'Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!'

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
'St. George for Marny!' cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilts, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: 'Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off —
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and
scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now.'

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and — 'No.'
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
'Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands:
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?'

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
'You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help — ah!' she said,
'Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest.'
'Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,'
Said Godmar, 'would I fail to tell
All that I know.' 'Foul lies,' she said.
'Eh? lies my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,
"Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!" —
Eh — gag me Robert! — sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders
sweet;

An end that few men would forget
That saw it — So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,

And strangely childlike came, and said:
'I will not.' Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert — both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men.
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
'So, Jehane, the first fite is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile.
As though this thing had made her mad.
This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

TWO RED ROSES ACROSS THE MOON

[1858.]

THERE was a lady lived in a hall,
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;
And ever she sung from noon to noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

There was a knight came riding by
In early spring, when the roads were dry;
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;
And left that lady singing at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
And the scarlet and blue had got to be
met,
He rode on the spur till the next warm
noon: —
Two red roses across the moon.

But the battle was scatter'd from hill to hill,
From the windmill to the watermill;
And he said to himself, as it near'd the noon,

Two red roses across the moon.

You scarce could see for the scarlet and blue,
A golden helm or a golden shoe;
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the noon,

Two red roses across the moon!

Verily then the gold bore through
The huddled spears of the scarlet and blue;
And they cried, as they cut them down at the noon,

Two red roses across the moon!

I trow he stopp'd when he rode again
By the hall, though draggled sore with the rain;
And his lips were pinch'd to kiss at the noon

Two red roses across the moon.

Under the may she stoop'd to the crown,
All was gold, there was nothing of brown;
And the horns blew up in the hall at noon,

Two red roses across the moon.

PRAISE OF MY LADY

[1858.]

My lady seems of ivory
Forehead, straight nose, and cheeks that be
Hollow'd a little mournfully.

Beata mea Domina!

Her forehead, overshadow'd much
By bows of hair, has a wave such
As God was good to make for me.

Beata mea Domina!

Not greatly long my lady's hair,
Nor yet with yellow colour fair,
But thick and crisped wonderfully:

Beata mea Domina!

Heavy to make the pale face sad,
And dark, but dead as though it had
Been forged by God most wonderfully

— Beata mea Domina! —

Of some strange metal, thread by thread,
To stand out from my lady's head,
Not moving much to tangle me.

Beata mea Domina!

Beneath her brows the lids fall slow,
The lashes a clear shadow throw
Where I would wish my lips to be.

Beata mea Domina!

Her great eyes, standing far apart,
Draw up some memory from her heart,
And gaze out very mournfully;

— Beata mea Domina! —

So beautiful and kind they are,
But most times looking out afar,
Waiting for something, not for me.

Beata mea Domina!

I wonder if the lashes long
Are those that do her bright eyes wrong,
For always half tears seem to be

— Beata mea Domina! —

Lurking below the underlid,
Darkening the place where they lie hid—
If they should rise and flow for me!

Beata mea Domina!

Her full lips being made to kiss,
Curl'd up and pensive each one is;
This makes me faint to stand and see.

Beata mea Domina!

Her lips are not contented now,
Because the hours pass so slow
Towards a sweet time: (pray for me),

— Beata mea Domina! —

Nay, hold thy peace! for who can tell;
But this at least I know full well,
Her lips are parted longingly,

— Beata mea Domina! —

So passionate and swift to move,
To pluck at any flying love,
That I grow faint to stand and see.

Beata mea Domina!

Yea! there beneath them is her chin,
So fine and round, it were a sin
To feel no weaker when I see

— Beata mea Domina! —

God's dealings; for with so much care
And troublous, faint lines wrought in
there,

He finishes her face for me.

Beata mea Domina!

Of her long neck what shall I say?
What things about her body's sway,
Like a knight's pennon or slim tree

— Beata mea Domina! —

Set gently waving in the wind;
Or her long hands that I may find
On some day sweet to move o'er me?

Beata mea Domina!

God pity me though, if I miss'd
The telling, how along her wrist
The veins creep, lying languidly

— Beata mea Domina! —

Inside her tender palm and thin.
Now give me pardon, dear, wherein
My voice is weak and vexes thee.
Beata mea Domina!

All men that see her any time,
I charge you straightly in this rhyme,
What, and wherever you may be,
—*Beata mea Domina!*—

To kneel before her; as for me,
I choke and grow quite faint to see
My lady moving graciously.
Beata mea Domina!

SUMMER DAWN

[First published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, October 1856. Reprinted 1858.]

PRAY but one prayer for me, 'twixt thy
closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the
stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning
light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the
aspens, betwixt the cloud-bars,
That are patiently waiting there for the
dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's
gold
Waits to float through them along with the
sun,
Far out in the meadows, above the young
corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and
cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the
dawn,
Round the lone house in the midst of the
corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

[1868-1870.]

PROLOGUE

*Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to
sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your
tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.*

*But rather, when weary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,*

*Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days
die,—*

*Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.*

*The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our
bread,*

*These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.*

*Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due
time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked
straight?*

*Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.*

*Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did
show,*

*That through one window men beheld the
spring,*

*And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines arow,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.*

*So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of
bliss*

*Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must
be;*

*Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall
slay,*

Not the poor singer of an empty day.

INTRODUCTION

*FORGET six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the
down,*

*And dream of London, small, and white,
and clean,*

*The clear Thames bordered by its gardens
green;*

*Think that below bridge the green lapping
waves*

*Smite some few keels that bear Levantine
staves*

*Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up
hill,*

*And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled
to fill,*

*His earthly paradise is fellowship, which he found by looking for an earthly
paradise on this earth.*

And treasured scanty spice from some far
 sea,
 Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
 And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of
 Guienne;
 While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey
 Chaucer's pen
 Moves over bills of lading, — mid such
 times
 Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my
 rhymes.

THE PROUD KING

ARGUMENT

[A certain king, blinded by pride, thought that
 he was something more than man, if not equal to
 God; but such a judgment fell on him that none
 knew him for king, and he suffered many things,
 till in the end, humbling himself, he regained his
 kingdom and honor.]

I

In a far country that I cannot name,
 And on a year long ages passed away,
 A king there dwelt, in rest and ease and
 fame,
 And richer than the emperor is to-day:
 The very thought of what this man might
 say
 From dusk to dawn kept many a lord
 awake,
 For fear of him did many a great man
 quake.

Young was he when he first sat on the
 throne,
 And he was wedded to a noble wife,
 But at the daïs must he sit alone,
 Nor durst a man speak to him for his life,
 Except with leave: naught knew he change
 or strife,
 But that the years passed silently away,
 And in his black beard gathered specks of
 gray.

Now so it chanced, upon a May morning,
 Wakeful he lay when yet low was the sun,
 Looking distraught at many a royal thing,
 And counting up his titles one by one,
 And thinking much of things that he had
 done;
 For full of life he felt, and hale and strong,
 And knew that none durst say when he
 did wrong.

For no man now could give him dread or
 doubt,
 The land was 'neath his sceptre far and
 wide,
 And at his beck would well-armed myriads
 shout.
 Then swelled his vain, unthinking heart
 with pride,
 Until at last he raised him up and cried,
 'What need have I for temple or for priest?
 Am I not God, whiles that I live at least?'

And yet withal that dead his fathers were,
 He needs must think that quick the years
 pass by;
 But he, who seldom yet had seen Death
 near
 Or heard his name, said, 'Still I may not
 die,
 Though underneath the earth my fathers
 lie;
 My sire indeed was called a mighty king,
 Yet, in regard of mine, a little thing

'His kingdom was; moreover his grandsire
 To him was but a prince of narrow lands,
 Whose father, though to things he did aspire
 Beyond most men, a great knight of his
 hands,
 Yet ruled some little town where now
 there stands

The kennel of my dogs; then may not I
 Rise higher yet, nor like poor wretches die?'

'Since up the ladder ever we have gone
 Step after step, nor fallen back again;
 And there are tales of people who have
 won
 A life enduring, without care or pain,
 Or any man to make their wishes vain:
 Perchance this prize unwitting now I hold;
 For times change fast, the world is waxen
 old.'

So mid these thoughts once more he fell
 asleep,
 And when he woke again, high was the
 sun;
 Then quickly from his gold bed did he leap,
 And of his former thoughts remembered
 none,
 But said, 'To-day through green woods will
 we run,
 Nor shall to-day be worse than yesterday,
 But better it may be, for game and play.'

So for the hunt was he apparellèd,
 And forth he rode with heart right well at
 ease;
 And many a strong, deep-chested hound
 they led
 Over the dewy grass betwixt the trees,
 And fair white horses fit for the white
 knees
 Of her the ancients fabled rides anights
 Betwixt the setting and the rising lights.

Now following up a mighty hart and swift
 The king rode long upon that morning-
 tide;
 And since his horse was worth a kingdom's
 gift,
 It chanced him all his servants to outride,
 Until unto a shaded river-side
 He came alone at hottest of the sun,
 When all the freshness of the day was done

Dismounting there, and seeing so far adown
The red-finn'd fishes o'er the gravel play,
It seemed that moment worth his royal
crown

To hide there from the burning of the day,
Wherefore he did off all his rich array,
And tied his horse unto a neighboring tree,
And in the water sported leisurely.

But when he was fulfilled of this delight
He gat him to the bank well satisfied,
And thought to do on him his raiment
bright

And homeward to his royal house to ride;
But 'mazed and angry, looking far and
wide,

Naught saw he of his horse and rich attire,
And 'gainst the thief 'gan threaten ven-
geance dire.

But little help his fury was to him,
So lustily he 'gan to shout and cry.
None answered; still the lazy chub did
swim

By inches 'gainst the stream; away did fly
The small pied bird, but nathless stayed
anigh,

And o'er the stream still plied his fluttering
trade,
Of such a helpless man not much afraid.

Weary of crying in that lonely place,
He ceased at last, and thinking what to do,
E'en as he was, up stream he set his face,
Since not far off a certain house he knew
Where dwelt his ranger, a lord leal and
true,

Who many a bounty at his hands had had,
And now to do him ease would be right
glad.

Thither he hastened on; and as he went
The hot sun sorely burned his naked skin,
The whiles he thought, 'When he to me
has lent

Fine raiment, and at ease I sit within
His coolest chamber clad in linen thin,
And drinking wine, the best that he has got,
I shall forget this troublous day and hot.'

Now note that while he thus was on his
way,

And still his people for their master sought,
There met them one who in the king's
array

Bestrode his very horse, and as they thought
Was none but he in good time to them
brought,

Therefore they hailed him king, and so all
rode

From out the forest to his fair abode.

And there in royal guise he sat at meat,
Served, as his wont was, 'neath the canopy,
And there the hounds fawned round about
his feet,

And there that city's elders did he see,
And with his lords took counsel what
should be;

And there at supper when the day waxed
dim

The queen within his chamber greeted him.

II

Leave we him there; for to the ranger's
gate

The other came, and on the horn he blew,
Till peered the wary porter through the
grate

To see if he, perchance, the blower knew,
Before he should the wicket-gate undo;
But when he saw him standing there, he
cried,

'What dost thou, friend, to show us all
thine hide?

'We list not buy to-day or flesh or fell;
Go home and get thyself a shirt at least,
If thou wouldst aught, for saith our vicar
well

That God hath given clothes e'en to the
beast.'

Therewith he turned to go; but, as he
ceased,

The king cried out, 'Open, O' foolish man!
I am thy lord and king, Jovinian.

'Go now, and tell thy master I am here
Desiring food and clothes, and in this
plight,

And then hereafter need'st thou have no
fear,

Because thou didst not know me at first
sight.'

'Yea, yea, I am but dreaming in the night,'
The carle said, 'and I bid thee, friend, to
dream:

Come through! here is no gate, it doth but
seem.'

With that his visage vanished from the
grate;

But when the king now found himself
alone,

He hurled himself against the mighty gate,
And beat upon it madly with a stone,

Half wondering, midst his rage, how any
one

Could live, if longed-for things he chanced
to lack;

But midst all this, at last the gate flew back,

And there the porter stood, brown-bill in
hand,

And said, 'Ah, fool, thou makest this ado,
Wishing before my lord's high seat to
stand;

Thou shalt be gladder soon hereby to go,
Or surely naught of handy blows I know.
Come, willy nilly, thou shalt tell this tale
Unto my lord, if aught it may avail.'

With that his staff he handled, as if he
Would smite the king, and said, 'Get on
before!

Saint Mary! now thou goest full leisurely,
Who erewhile fain wouldst batter down the
door.

See now, if ere this matter is passed o'er,
I come to harm, yet thou shalt not escape;
Thy back is broad enow to pay thy jape.'

Half blind with rage the king before him
passed,
But naught of all he doomed him to durst
say,
Lest he from rest nigh won should yet be
cast;

So with a swelling heart he took his way,
Thinking right soon his shame to cast away,
And the carle followed still, ill satisfied
With such a wretched losel to abide.

Fair was the ranger's house, and new and
white,
And by the king built scarce a year ago,
And carved about for this same lord's de-
light

With woodland stories deftly wrought in
stone;

There oft the king was wont to come alone,
For much he loved this lord, who erst had
been

A landless squire, a servant of the queen.

Now long a lord and clad in rich attire,
In his fair hall he sat before the wine,
Watching the evening sun's yet burning fire
Through the close branches of his pleas-
ance shine,

In that mood when man thinks himself
divine,

Remembering not whereto we all must
come,

Not thinking aught but of his happy home.

From just outside loud mocking merriment
He heard midst this; and therewithal a
squire

Came hurrying up, his laughter scarcely
spent,

Who said, 'My lord, a man in such attire
As Adam's ere he took the devil's hire,

Who saith that thou wilt know him for the
king,

Up from the gate John Porter needs must
bring.

'He to the king is nothing like in aught
But that his beard he weareth in such
guise

As doth my lord: wilt thou that he be
brought?

Perchance some treason 'neath his madness
lies.'

'Yea,' saith the ranger, 'that may well be
wise;

But haste, for this eve am I well at ease,
Nor would be wearied with such folks as
these.'

Then went the squire, and, coming back
again,

The porter and the naked king brought in,
Who thinking now that this should end his
pain,

Forgat his fury and the porter's sin,
And said, 'Thou wonderest how I came to
win

This raiment, that kings long have ceased
to wear,
Since Noah's flood has altered all the air?

'Well, thou shalt know; but first I pray
thee, Hugh,

Reach me that cloak that lieth on the
board,

For certes, though thy folk are leal and
true,

It seemeth that they deem a mighty lord
Is made by crown, and silken robe, and
sword:

Lo, such are borel folk; but thou and I
Fail not to know the signs of majesty.

'Thou risest not! thou lookest strange on
me!

Ah! what is this? Who reigneth in my
stead?

How long hast thou been plotting secretly?
Then slay me now, for if I be not dead

Armies will rise up when I nod my head.
Slay me!—or cast thy treachery away,

And have anew my favor from this day.'

'Why should I tell thee that thou ne'er
wast king?'

The ranger said, 'thou knowest not what I
say;

Poor man, I pray God help thee in this
thing,

And, ere thou diest, send thee some good
day;

Nor hence unholpen shalt thou go away.
Good fellows, this poor creature is but
mad;

Take him, and in a coat let him be clad,

'And give him meat and drink, and on this
night

Beneath some roof of ours let him abide,
For some day God may set his folly right.'

Then spread the king his arms abroad and
cried,

'Woe to thy food, thy house, and thee be-
tide,

Thou loathsome traitor! Get ye from the
hall,

Lest smitten by God's hand this roof should
fall!

'Yea, if the world be but an idle dream,
And God deals naught with it, yet shall ye
see

Red flame from out these carven windows
stream.

I—I will burn this vile place utterly,
And strewn with salt the poisonous earth
shall be,

That such a wretch of such a man has
made,

That so such Judases may grow afraid.'

Thus raving, those who held him he shook
off

And rushed from out the hall, nigh mad
indeed,

And gained the gate, not heeding blow or
scoff,

Nor longer of his nakedness took heed,
But ran, he knew not where, at headlong
speed,

Till, when at last his strength was fully
spent,

Worn out, he fell beneath a woody bent.

But for the ranger, left alone in peace,
He bade his folk bring in the minstrelsy;
And thinking of his life, and fair increase
Of all his goods, a happy man was he,

And towards his master felt right lovingly,
And said, 'This luckless madman will
avail,

When next I see the king, for one more
tale.'

III

Meanwhile the real king by the roadside lay,
Panting, confused, scarce knowing if he
dreamed,

Until at last, when vanished was the day,
Through the dark night far off a bright
light gleamed;

Which growing quickly, down the road
there streamed

The glare of torches, held by men who
ran

Before the litter of a mighty man.

These mixed with soldiers soon the road
did fill,

And on their harness could the king behold
The badge of one erst wont to do his will;
A counsellor, a gatherer-up of gold,
Who underneath his rule had now grown
old;

Then wrath and bitterness so filled his
heart,

That from his wretched lair he needs must
start,

And o'er the clatter shrilly did he cry,
'Well met, Duke Peter! ever art thou wise;
Surely thou wilt not let a day go by

Ere thou art good friends with mine ene-
mies;

O fit to rule within a land of lies,
Go on thy journey, make thyself more meet
To sit in hell beneath the devil's feet!'

But as he ceased a soldier drew anear,
And smote him flatling with his sheathèd
sword,

And said, 'Speak louder, that my lord may
hear,

And give thee wages for thy ribald word!
Come forth, for I must show thee to my
lord,

For he may think thee more than mad
indeed,

Who of men's ways hast taken wondrous
heed.'

Now was the litter stayed midmost the road,
And round about the torches in a ring

Were gathered, and their flickering light
now glowed

In gold and gems and many a lordly thing,
And showed that face well known unto the
king,

That, smiling yesterday, right humble
words

Had spoken midst the concourse of the
lords.

But now he said, 'Man, thou wert cursing
me,

If these folk heard aright; what wilt thou
then?

Deem'st thou that I have done some wrong
to thee,

Or hast thou scathe from any of my men?
In any case tell all thy tale again

When on the judgment-seat thou see'st
me sit,

And I will give no careless ear to it.'

'The night is dark, and in the summer wind
The torches flicker; canst thou see my face?

Bid them draw nigher yet, and call to mind
Who gave thee all thy riches and thy
place—

Well; if thou canst, deny me with such
grace

As by the firelight Peter swore of old,
When in that Maundy-week the night was
cold—

'Alas! canst thou not see I am the king?'
So spoke he, as their eyes met mid the
blaze,

And the king saw the dread foreshadowing,
Within the elder's proud and stony gaze,
Of what those lips, thin with the lapse of
days,

Should utter now; nor better it befell:
'Friend, a strange story thou art pleased
to tell;

'Thy luck it is thou tellest it to me,
Who deem thee mad and let thee go thy
way:

The king is not a man to pity thee,
Or on thy folly thy fool's tale to lay:
Poor fool! take this, and with the light of
day

Buy food and raiment of some laboring
clown,
And by my counsel keep thee from the
town,

'For fear thy madness break out in some
place

Where folk thy body to the judge must
hale,

And then indeed wert thou in evil case—
Press on, sirs! or the time will not avail.'
There stood the king, with limbs that 'gan
to fail,

Speechless, and holding in his trembling
hand

A coin new stamped for people of the land;

Thereon, with sceptre, crown, and royal
robe,

The image of a king, himself, was wrought;
His jewelled feet upon a quartered globe,
As though by him all men were vain and
naught.

One moment the red glare the silver caught,
As the lord ceased; the next his hurrying
folk

The flaring circle round the litter broke.

The next, their shadows barred a patch of
light,

Fast vanishing, all else around was black;
And the poor wretch, left lonely with the
night,

Muttered, 'I wish the day would ne'er come
back,

If all that once I had I now must lack:
Ah, God! how long is it since I was king,
Nor lacked enough to wish for anything?'

Then down the lonely road he wandered
yet,

Following the vanished lights, he scarce
knew why,

Till he began his sorrows to forget,
And, steeped in drowsiness, at last drew
nigh

A grassy bank, where worn with misery,
He slept the dreamless sleep of weariness,
That many a time such wretches' eyes will
bless.

IV

But at the dawn he woke, nor knew at first
What ugly chain of grief had brought him
there,

Nor why he felt so wretched and accurst;
At last remembering, the fresh morning air,

The rising sun, and all things fresh and
fair,

Yet caused some little hope in him to rise,
That end might come to these new miseries.

So looking round about, he saw that he
To his own city gates was come anear;
Then he arose and going warily,
And hiding now and then for very fear
Of folk who bore their goods and country
cheer

Unto the city's market, at the last
Unto a stone's-throw of the gate he passed.

But when he drew unto the very gate,
Into the throng of country folk he came
Who for the opening of the door did wait,
Of whom some mocked, and some cried at
him shame,

And some would know his country and his
name;

But one into his wagon drew him up,
And gave him milk from out a beechen cup,

And asked him of his name and misery;
Then in his throat a swelling passion rose,
Which yet he swallowed down, and,
'Friend,' said he,

'Last night I had the hap to meet the foes
Of God and man, who robbed me, and
with blows

Stripped off my weed and left me on the
way:

Thomas the Pilgrim am I called to-day.

'A merchant am I of another town,
And rich enow to pay thee for thy deed,
If at the king's door thou wilt set me down;
For there a squire I know, who at my
need

Will give me food and drink and fitting
weed.

What is thy name? in what place dost thou
live?

That I some day great gifts to thee may
give.'

'Fair sir,' the carle said, 'I am poor enow,
Though certes food I lack not easily;
My name is Christopher a-Green; I sow
A little orchard set with bush and tree,
And ever there the kind land keepeth me,
For I, now fifty, from a little boy
Have dwelt thereon, and known both grief
and joy.

'The house my grandsire built there has
grown old,

And certainly a bounteous gift it were
If thou shouldst give me just enough of
gold

To build it new; nor shouldst thou lack my
prayer

For such a gift.' 'Nay, friend, have thou
no care,'

The king said: 'this is but a little thing
To me, who oft am richer than the king.'

Now as they talked the gate was opened
wide,

And toward the palace went they through
the street,

And Christopher walked ever by the side
Of his rough wain, where midst the may-
flowers sweet

Jovinian lay, that folk whom they might
meet

Might see him not to mock at his bare skin:
So shortly to the king's door did they win.

Then through the open gate Jovinian ran
Of the first court, and no man stayed him
there;

But as he reached the second gate, a man
Of the king's household, seeing him all bare
And bloody, cried out, 'Whither dost thou
fare?

Sure thou art seventy times more mad
than mad,
Or else some magic potion thou hast had,

'Whereby thou fear'st not steel or anything.'
'But,' said the king, 'good fellow, I know
thee;

And can it be thou knowest not thy king?
Nay, thou shalt have a good reward of me,
That thou wouldst rather have than ten
years' fee,

If thou wilt clothe me in fair weed again,
For now to see my council am I fain.'

'Out, ribald!' quoth the fellow, 'what say'st
thou?

Thou art my lord, whom God reward and
bless?

Truly before long shalt thou find out how
John Hangman cureth ill folk's wilfulness;
Yea, from his scourge the blood has run
for less

Than that which now thou sayest: nay,
what say I?

For lighter words have I seen tall men die.

'Come now, the sergeants to this thing shall
see!

So to the guardroom was Jovinian brought,
Where his own soldiers mocked him bit-
terly,

And all his desperate words they heeded
naught;

Until at last there came to him this thought,
That never from this misery should he
win,

But, spite of all his struggles, die therein.

And terrible it seemed, that everything
So utterly was changed since yesterday;
That these who were the soldiers of the
king.

Ready to lie down in the common way
Before him, nor durst rest if he bade play,
Now stood and mocked him, knowing not
the face

At whose command each man there had his
place.

'Ah, God!' said he, 'is this another earth
From that whereon I stood two days ago?
Or else in sleep have I had second birth?
Or among mocking shadows do I go,
Unchanged myself of flesh and fell, al-
though

My fair weed I have lost and royal gear?
And meanwhile all are changed that I meet
here;

'And yet in heart and nowise outwardly.'
Amid his wretched thoughts two sergeants
came,

Who said, 'Hold, sirs! because the king
would see

The man who thus so rashly brings him
shame,

By taking his high style and spotless name,
That never has been questioned ere to-day.
Come, fool! needs is it thou must go our
way.'

So at the sight of him all men turned
round,

As 'twixt these two across the courts he
went,

With downcast head and hands together
bound;

While from the windows maid and varlet
leant,

And through the morning air fresh laughter
sent;

Until unto the threshold they were come
Of the great hall within that kingly home.

Therewith right fast Jovinian's heart must
beat,

As now he thought, 'Lo, here shall end the
strife;

For either shall I sit on mine own seat,
Known unto all, soldier and lord and wife,
Or else is this the ending of my life,
And no man henceforth shall remember
me,

And a vain name in records shall I be.

Therewith he raised his head up, and be-
held

One clad in gold set on his royal throne,
Gold-crowned, whose hand the ivory sceptre
held;

And underneath him sat the queen alone,
Ring'd round with standing lords, of whom
not one

Did aught but utmost reverence unto him;
Then did Jovinian shake in every limb.

Yet midst amaze and rage to him it seemed
 This man was nowise like him in the face;
 But with a marvellous glory his head
 gleamed,
 As though an angel sat in that high place,
 Where erst he sat like all his royal race—
 But their eyes met, and with a stern, calm
 brow
 The shining one cried out, 'And where art
 thou?

'Where art thou, robber of my majesty?'
 'Was I not king,' he said, 'but yesterday?
 And though to-day folk give my place to
 thee,
 I am Jovinian; yes, though none gainsay,
 If on these very stones thou shouldst me
 slay,
 And though no friend be left for me to
 moan,
 I am Jovinian still, and king alone.'

Then said that other, 'O thou foolish man,
 King was I yesterday, and long before,
 Nor is my name aught but Jovinian,
 Whom in this house the queen my mother
 bore
 Unto my longing father, for right sore
 Was I desired before I saw the light;
 Thou, fool, art first to speak against my
 right.

'And surely well thou meritest to die;
 Yet ere that I bid lead thee unto death,
 Harken to these my lords that stand anigh,
 And what this faithful queen beside me
 saith,
 Then mayst thou many a year hence draw
 thy breath,
 If these should stammer in their speech
 one whit:
 Behold this face, lords, look ye well on it!

'Thou, O fair queen, say now whose face is
 this!
 Then cried they, 'Hail, O Lord Jovinian!
 Long mayst thou live!' and the queen knelt
 to kiss
 His gold-shod feet, and through her face
 there ran

Sweet color, as she said, 'Thou art the man
 By whose side I have lain for many a year;
 Thou art my lord Jovinian, lief and dear.'

Then said he, 'O thou wretch, hear now
 and see!
 What thing should hinder me to slay thee
 now?

And yet, indeed, such mercy is in me,
 If thou wilt kneel down humbly and avow
 Thou art no king, but base-born, as I know
 Thou art indeed, in mine house shalt thou
 live,
 And as thy service is, so shalt thou thrive.'

But the unhappy king laughed bitterly,
 The red blood rose to flush his visage wan
 Where erst the gray of death began to be:
 'Thou liest!' he said. 'I am Jovinian,
 Come of great kings; nor am I such a man
 As still to live when all delight is gone,
 As thou mightst do, who sittest on my
 throne.'

No answer made the other for a while,
 But sat and gazed upon him steadfastly,
 Until across his face there came a smile,
 Where scorn seemed mingled with some
 great pity.
 And then he said, 'Nathless thou shalt not
 die,
 But live on as thou mayst, a lowly man,
 Forgetting thou wast once Jovinian.'

Then wildly round the hall Jovinian gazed,
 Turning about to many a well-known face;
 But none of all his folk seemed grieved or
 'mazed,
 But stood unmoved, each in his wonted
 place:
 There were the Lords, the Marshal with
 his mace,
 The Chamberlain, the Captain of the Guard,
 Gray-headed, with his wrinkled face and
 hard,

That had peered down so many a lane of
 war;
 There stood the grave ambassadors arow,
 Come from half-conquered lands; without
 the bar
 The foreign merchants gazed upon the
 show,
 Willing new things of that great land to
 know;
 Nor was there any doubt in any man
 That the gold throne still held Jovinian.

Yea, as the sergeants laid their hands on
 him,
 The mighty hound that crouched before
 the throne,
 Flew at him fain to tear him limb from
 limb,
 Though in the woods the brown bear's
 dying groan
 He and that beast had often heard alone.
 'Ah!' muttered he, 'take thou thy wages
 too,
 Worship the risen sun as these men do.'

They thrust him out; and as he passed the
 door,
 The murmur of the stately court he heard
 Behind him, and soft footfalls on the floor,
 And though by this somewhat his skin was
 soured,
 Hung back at the rough eager wind afraid;

But from the place they dragged him
through the gate,
Wherethrough he oft had rid in royal
state.

Then down the streets they led him, where
of old
He, coming back from some well-finished
war,
Had seen the line of flashing steel and gold
Wind upwards 'twixt the houses from the
bar,
While clashed the bells from wreathèd
spires afar;
Now moaning, as they haled him on, he
said,
'God and the world against one lonely
head!'

v

But soon, the bar being passed, they loosed
their hold,
And said, 'Thus saith by us our lord the
king,
Dwell now in peace, but yet be not so bold
To come again, or to thy lies to cling,
Lest unto thee there fall a worse thing;
And for ourselves we bid thee ever pray
For him who has been good to thee this
day.'

Therewith they turned away into the town,
And still he wandered on and knew not
where,
Till, stumbling at the last, he fell adown,
And looking round beheld a brook right
fair,
That ran in pools and shallows here and
there,
And on the further side of it a wood,
Nigh which a lowly clay-built hovel stood.

Gazing thereat, it came into his mind
A priest dwelt there, a hermit wise and
old,
Whom he had ridden oftentimes to find,
In days when first the sceptre he did hold,
And unto whom his mind he oft had told,
And had good counsel from him, though
indeed
A scanty crop had sprung from that good
seed.

Therefore he passed the brook with heavy
cheer,
And toward the little house went speedily,
And at the door knocked, trembling with
his fear,
Because he thought, 'Will he remember
me?
If not, within me must there surely be
Some devil who turns everything to ill,
And makes my wretched body do his will.'

So, while such doleful things as this he
thought,

There came unto the door the holy man,
Who said, 'Good friend, what tidings hast
thou brought?'

'Father,' he said, 'knowest thou Jovinian?
Know'st thou me not, made naked, poor,
and wan?'

Alas, O father, am I not the king,
The rightful lord of thee and everything?'

'Nay, thou art mad to tell me such a tale!
The hermit said; 'if thou seek'st soul's
health here,

Right little will such words as this avail;
It were a better deed to shrive thee clear,
And take the pardon Christ has bought so
dear,

Than to an ancient man such mocks to
say
That would be fitter for a Christmas play.'

So to his hut he got him back again;
And fell the unhappy king upon his knees,
And unto God at last he did complain,
Saying, 'Lord God, what bitter things are
these?'

What hast thou done, that every man that
sees

This wretched body, of my death is fain?
O Lord God, give me back myself again,

E'en if therewith I needs must die straight-
way!

Indeed I know that since upon the earth
I first did go, I ever day by day
Have grown the worse, who was of little
worth

E'en at the best time since my helpless birth.
And yet it pleased thee once to make me
king;

Why hast thou made me now this wretched
thing?

'Why am I hated so of every one?
Wilt thou not let me live my life again,
Forgetting all the deeds that I have done,
Forgetting my old name, and honors vain,
That I may cast away this lonely pain?
Yet if thou wilt not, help me in this strife,
That I may pass my little span of life,

'Not made a monster by unhappiness.
What shall I say? Thou mad'st me weak
of will,

Thou wrapped'st me in ease and careless-
ness,
And yet, as some folk say, thou lovest me
still;

Look down, of folly I have had my fill,
And am but now as first thou madest me,
Weak, yielding clay to take impress of
thee.'

So said he weeping, and but scarce had done,
When yet again came forth that hermit old,

And said, 'Alas! my master and my son,
Is this a dream my wearied eyes behold?
What doleful wonder now shall I be told
Of that ill world that I so long have left?
What thing thy glory from thee has bereft?'

A strange surprise of joy therewith there came

To that worn heart; he said, 'For some great sin

The Lord my God has brought me unto shame;

I am unknown of servants, wife, and kin,
Unknown of all the lords that stand within
My father's house; nor didst thou know me more

When e'en just now I stood before thy door.

'Now, since thou know'st me, surely God is good,

And will not slay me, and good hope I have
Of help from Him that died upon the rood,
And is a mighty lord to slay and save:

So now again these blind men will I brave,
If thou wilt give me of thy poorest weed,
And some rough food, the which I sorely need;

'Then of my sins thou straight shalt shrive me clean.'

Then, weeping, said the holy man, 'Dear lord,

What heap of woes upon thine head has been!

Enter, O king, take this rough gown and cord,

And scanty food, my hovel can afford;
And tell me everything thou hast to say,

And then the High God speed thee on thy way.'

So when in coarse serge raiment he was clad,

He told him all his pride had made him think,

And showed him of his life both good and bad;

And then, being houselled, did he eat and drink,

While in the wise man's heart his words did sink,

For, 'God be praised!' he thought, 'I am no king,

Who scarcely shall do right in anything!'

Then he made ready for the king his ass,
And bade again God speed him on the way;

And down the road the king made haste to pass

As it was growing toward the end of day,
With sober joy for troubles passed away,
But trembling still, as onward he did ride,

Meeting few folk upon that eventide.

VI

So to the city gate being come at last,
He noted there two ancient warders stand,
Whereof one looked askance as he went past,

And whispered low behind his held-up hand

Unto his mate, 'The king, who gave command

That if disguised he passed this gate to-day,

No reverence we should do him on the way.'

Thereat with joy Jovinian smiled again,
And so passed onward quickly down the street;

And wellnigh was he eased of all his pain
When he beheld the folk that he might meet

Gaze hard at him, as though they fain would greet

His well-known face, but durst not, knowing well

He would not any of his state should tell.

Withal unto the palace being come,
He lighted down thereby and entered,

And once again it seemed his royal home,
For folk again before him bowed the head;

And to him came a squire, who softly said,
'The queen awaits thee, O my lord the king,

Within the little hall where minstrels sing,

'Since there thou badst her meet thee on this night.'

'Lead on then!' said the king; and in his heart

He said, 'Perfay all goeth more than right,
And I am king again;' but with a start

He thought of him who played the kingly part

That morn, yet said, 'If God will have it so,

This man like all the rest my face will know.'

So in the little hall the queen he found,
Asleep, as one a spell binds suddenly;

For her fair broidery lay upon the ground,
And in her lap her open hand did lie,

The silken-threaded needle close thereby;

And by her stood that image of the king
In rich apparel, crown, and signet ring.

But when the king stepped forth with
angry eye
And would have spoken, came a sudden
light,
And changed was that other utterly;
For he was clad in robe of shining white,
Inwrought with flowers of unnamed colors
bright,
Girt with a marvellous girdle, and whose
hem
Fell to his naked feet and shone in them;
And from his shoulders did two wings
arise,
That with the swaying of his body played
This way and that; of strange and lovely
dyes
Their feathers were, and wonderfully
made:
And now he spoke, 'O king, be not dis-
mayed,
Or think my coming here so strange to be,
For oft ere this have I been close to thee.
'And now thou knowest in how short a
space
The God that made the world can unmake
thee,
And though he alter in no whit thy face,
Can make all folk forget thee utterly,
That thou to-day a nameless wretch mayst
be,
Who yesterday woke up without a peer,
The wide world's marvel and the people's
fear.
'Behold, thou oughtest to thank God for
this,
That on the hither side of thy dark grave
Thou well hast learned how great a God
he is,
Who from the heavens countless rebels
drove,
Yet turns himself such folk as thee to save;
For many a man thinks naught at all of it,
Till in a darksome land he comes to sit,
'Lamenting everything: so do not thou!
For inasmuch as thou thought'st not to die,
This thing may happen to thee even now.
Because the day unspeakable draws nigh,
When bathed in unknown flame all things
shall lie;
And if thou art upon God's side that day,
Unslain, thine earthly part shall pass away.
'Or if thy body in the grave must rot,
Well mayst thou see how small a thing is
this,
Whose pain of yesterday now hurts thee
not,
Now thou hast come again to earthly bliss,
Though bitter-sweet thou knowest well this
is,
And though no coming day can ever see
Ending of happiness where thou mayst be.

'Now must I go, nor wilt thou see me more
Until the day when, unto thee at least,
This world is gone, and an unmeasured
shore,
Where all is wonderful and changed, thou
seest:
Therefore, farewell! at council and at feast
Thy nobles shalt thou meet as thou hast
done,
Nor wilt thou more be strange to any one.'
So scarce had he done speaking ere his
wings
Within the doorway of the hall did gleam,
And then he vanished quite; and all these
things
Unto Jovinian little more did seem
Than some distinct and well-remembered
dream,
From which one wakes amidst a feverish
night,
Taking the moonshine for the morning
light.
Silent he stood, not moving for a while,
Pondering o'er all these wondrous things,
until
The queen arose from sleep, and with a
smile
Said, 'O fair lord, your great men by your
will
E'en as I speak the banquet-chamber fill,
To greet thee amidst joy and revelling;
Wilt thou not therefore meet them as a
king?'
So from that place of marvels having gone,
Half-mazed, he soon was clad in rich
array,
And sat thereafter on his kingly throne,
As though no other had sat there that day;
Nor did a soul of all his household say
A word about the man who on that morn
Had stood there naked, helpless, and for-
lorn.
But ever, day by day, the thought of it
Within Jovinian's heart the clearer grew,
As o'er his head the ceaseless time did flit,
And everything still towards its ending
drew,
New things becoming old, and old things
new;
Till, when a moment of eternity
Had passed, gray-headed did Jovinian lie
One sweet May morning, wakeful in his
bed,
And thought, 'That day is thirty years
agone
Since useless folly came into my head,
Whereby, before the steps of mine own
throne,
I stood in helpless agony alone,

And of the wondrous things that there
befell,
When I am gone there will be none to
tell.

'No man is now alive who thinks that he
Who bade thrust out the madman on that
tide

Was other than the king they used to see:
Long years have passed now since the her-
mit died;

So must I tell the tale, ere by his side
I lie, lest it be unrecorded quite,
Like a forgotten dream in morning light.

'Yea, lest I die ere night come, this same
day

Unto some scribe will I tell everything,
That it may lie, when I am gone away,
Stored up within the archives of the king;
And may God grant the words thereof may
ring

Like His own voice in the next comer's
ears,
Whereby his folk shall shed the fewer
tears!'

So it was done, and at the king's command
A clerk that day did note it every whit,
And after by a man of skilful hand
In golden letters fairly was it writ;
Yet little heed the new king took of it
That filled the throne when King Jovinian
died,
So much did all things feed his swelling
pride.

But whether God chastised him in his turn,
And he grew wise thereafter, I know not;
I think by eld alone he came to learn
How lowly on some day must be his lot.
But ye, O kings, think all that ye have got
To be but gauds cast out upon some heap,
And stolen the while the Master was asleep.

THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE

ARGUMENT

[How on an Image that stood anciently in Rome
were written certain words, which none under-
stood, until a scholar, coming there, knew their
meaning, and thereby discovered great marvels,
but withal died miserably.]

IN half-forgotten days of old,
As by our fathers we were told,
Within the town of Rome there stood
An image cut of cornel-wood,
And on the upraised hand of it
Men might behold these letters writ—
'PERCUTE HIC:' which is to say,
In that tongue that we speak to-day,
'Strike here!' nor yet did any know
The cause why this was written so,

Thus in the middle of the square,
In the hot sun and summer air,
The snow-drift and the driving rain,
That image stood, with little pain,
For twice a hundred years and ten;
While many a band of striving men
Were driven betwixt woe and mirth
Swiftly across the weary earth,
From nothing unto dark nothing:
And many an emperor and king,
Passing with glory or with shame,
Left little record of his name,
And no remembrance of the face
Once watched with awe for gifts or grace.

Fear little, then, I counsel you,
What any son of man can do;
Because a log of wood will last
While many a life of man goes past,
And all is over in short space.

Now so it chanced that to this place
There came a man of Sicily,
Who, when the image he did see,
Knew full well who, in days of yore,
Had set it there; for much strange lore,
In Egypt and in Babylon,
This man with painful toil had won,
And many secret things could do:
So verily full well he knew
That master of all sorcery
Who wrought the thing in days gone by,
And doubted not that some great spell
It guarded, but could nowise tell
What it might be. So, day by day,
Still would he loiter on the way,
And watch the image carefully,
Well mocked of many a passer-by.

And on a day he stood and gazed
Upon the slender finger, raised
Against a doubtful cloudy sky,
Nigh noontide; and thought, 'Certainly
The master who made thee so fair
By wondrous art, had not stopped there,
But made thee speak, had he not thought
That thereby evil might be brought
Upon his spell.' But as he spoke,
From out a cloud the noon sun broke
With watery light, and shadows cold:
Then did the Scholar well behold
How, from that finger carved to tell
Those words, a short black shadow fell
Upon a certain spot of ground,
And thereon, looking all around
And seeing none heeding, went straightway
Whereas the finger's shadow lay,
And with his knife about the place
A little circle did he trace;
Then home he turned with throbbing head,
And forthright gat him to his bed,
And slept until the night was late
And few men stirred from gate to gate.

So when at midnight he did wake,
Pickaxe and shovel did he take,

And, going to that now silent square,
 He found the mark his knife made there,
 And quietly with many a stroke
 The pavement of the place he broke:
 And so, the stones being set apart,
 He 'gan to dig with beating heart,
 And from the hole in haste he cast
 The marl and gravel; till at last,
 Full shoulder high, his arms were jarred,
 For suddenly his spade struck hard
 With clang against some metal thing:
 And soon he found a brazen ring,
 All green with rust, twisted, and great
 As a man's wrist, set in a plate
 Of copper, wrought all curiously
 With words unknown though plain to see
 Spite of the rust; and flowering trees,
 And beasts, and wicked images,
 Whereat he shuddered; for he knew
 What ill things he might come to do,
 If he should still take part with these
 And that great master strive to please.

But small time had he then to stand
 And think, so straight he set his hand
 Unto the ring; but where he thought
 That by main strength it must be brought
 From out its place, lo! easily
 It came away, and let him see
 A winding staircase wrought of stone,
 Wherethrough the new-come wind did
 moan.

Then thought he, 'If I come alive
 From out this place, well shall I thrive,
 For I may look here certainly
 The treasures of a king to see,
 A mightier man than men are now.
 So in few days what man shall know
 The needy Scholar, seeing me
 Great in the place where great men be,
 The richest man in all the land?
 Beside the best then shall I stand,
 And some unheard-of palace have;
 And if my soul I may not save
 In heaven, yet here in all men's eyes
 Will I make some sweet paradise,
 With marble cloisters, and with trees
 And bubbling wells, and fantasies,
 And things all men deem strange and rare,
 And crowds of women kind and fair,
 That I may see, if so I please,
 Laid on the flowers, or mid the trees
 With half-clad bodies wandering.
 There, dwelling happier than the king,
 What lovely days may yet be mine!
 How shall I live with love and wine
 And music, till I come to die!
 And then—who knoweth certainly
 What haps to us when we are dead?
 Truly I think by likelihead
 Naught haps to us of good or bad;
 Therefore on earth will I be glad

A short space, free from hope or fear;
 And fearless will I enter here
 And meet my fate, whatso it be.'

Now on his back a bag had he,
 To bear what treasure he might win,
 And therewith now did he begin
 To go adown the winding stair;
 And found the walls all painted fair
 With images of many a thing,
 Warrior and priest, and queen and king,
 But nothing knew what they might be.
 Which things full clearly could he see,
 For lamps were hung up here and there
 Of strange device, but wrought right fair,
 And pleasant savor came from them.

At last a curtain, on whose hem
 Unknown words in red gold were writ,
 He reached, and softly raising it
 Stepped back, for now did he behold
 A goodly hall hung round with gold,
 And at the upper end could see
 Sitting a glorious company:
 Therefore he trembled, thinking well
 They were no men, but fiends of hell.
 But while he waited, trembling sore,
 And doubtful of his late-learned lore,
 A cold blast of the outer air
 Blew out the lamps upon the stair,
 And all was dark behind him; then
 Did he fear less to face those men
 Than, turning round, to leave them there
 While he went groping up the stair.
 Yea, since he heard no cry or call
 Or any speech from them at all,
 He doubted they were images
 Set there some dying king to please
 By that great master of the art:
 Therefore at last with stouter heart
 He raised the cloth and entered in
 In hope that happy life to win,
 And drawing nigher did behold
 That these were bodies dead and cold,
 Attired in full royal guise,
 And wrought by art in such a wise
 That living they all seemed to be,
 Whose very eyes he well could see,
 That now beheld not foul or fair,
 Shining as though alive they were.
 And midmost of that company
 An ancient king that man could see,
 A mighty man, whose beard of gray
 A foot over his gold gown lay;
 And next beside him sat his queen,
 Who in a flowery gown of green
 And golden mantle well was clad,
 And on her neck a collar had
 Too heavy for her dainty breast;
 Her loins by such a belt were pressed
 That whoso in his treasury
 Held that alone a king might be.
 On either side of these, a lord
 Stood heedfully before the board,

And in their hands held bread and wine
 For service; behind these did shine
 The armor of the guards, and then
 The well-attired serving-men,
 The minstrels clad in raiment meet;
 And over against the royal seat
 Was hung a lamp, although no flame
 Was burning there, but there was set
 Within its open golden fret
 A huge carbuncle, red and bright;
 Wherefrom there shone forth such a light
 That great hall was as clear by it,
 As though by wax it had been lit,
 As some great church at Easter-tide.

Now set a little way aside,
 Six paces from the dais stood,
 An image made of brass and wood,
 In likeness of a full-armed knight
 Who pointed 'gainst the ruddy light
 A huge shaft ready in a bow.
 Pondering how he could come to know
 What all these marvellous matters meant,
 About the hall the Scholar went,
 Trembling, though nothing moved as yet;
 And for a while did he forget
 The longings that had brought him there
 In wondering at these marvels fair;
 And still for fear he doubted much
 One jewel of their robes to touch.

But as about the hall he passed
 He grew more used to them at last,
 And thought, 'Swiftly the time goes by,
 And now no doubt the day draws nigh.
 Folk will be stirring; by my head
 A fool I am to fear the dead,
 Who have seen living things enow,
 Whose very names no man can know,
 Whose shapes brave men might well af-
 fright

More than the lion in the night
 Wandering for food;' therewith he drew
 Unto those royal corpses two,
 That on dead brows still wore the crown;
 And midst the golden cups set down
 The rugged wallet from his back,
 Patched of strong leather, brown and
 black.

Then, opening wide its mouth, took up
 From off the board a golden cup
 The king's dead hand was laid upon,
 Whose unmoved eyes upon him shone,
 And recked no more of that last shame
 Than if he were the beggar lame,
 Who in old days was wont to wait
 For a dog's meal beside the gate.

Of which shame naught our man did
 reckon,

But laid his hand upon the neck
 Of the slim queen, and thence undid
 The jewelled collar, that straight slid
 Down her smooth bosom to the board.
 And when these matters he had stored

Safe in his sack, with both their crowns,
 The jewelled parts of their rich gowns,
 Their shoes and belts, brooches and rings,
 And cleared the board of all rich things,
 He staggered with them down the hall.
 But as he went his eyes did fall
 Upon the wonderful green stone,
 Upon the hall floor laid alone.
 He said, 'Though thou art not so great
 To add by much unto the weight
 Of this my sack indeed, yet thou,
 Certes, would make me rich enow,
 That verily with thee I might
 Wage one half of the world to fight
 The other half of it, and I
 The lord of all the world might die;
 I will not leave thee' therewithal
 He knelt down midmost of the hall,
 Thinking it would come easily
 Into his hand; but when that he
 Gave hold of it, full fast it stuck.
 So, fuming, down he laid his sack,
 And with both hands pulled lustily.
 But as he strained, he cast his eye
 Unto the dais, and saw there
 The image who the great bow bare
 Moving the bowstring to his ear;
 So, shrieking out aloud for fear,
 Of that rich stone he loosed his hold
 And, catching up his bag of gold,
 Gat to his feet: but ere he stood,
 The evil thing of brass and wood
 Up to his ears the notches drew;
 And clanging forth the arrow flew,
 And midmost of the carbuncle
 Clanging again, the forked barbs fell,
 And all was dark as pitch straightway.

So there until the judgment day
 Shall come and find his bones laid low,
 And raise them up for weal or woe;
 This man must bide; cast down he lay,
 While all his past life day by day
 In one short moment he could see
 Drawn out before him, while that he
 In terror by that fatal stone
 Was laid, and scarcely dared to moan.
 But in a while his hope returned,
 And then, though nothing he discerned
 He gat him up upon his feet,
 And all about the walls he beat
 To find some token of the door,
 But never could he find it more,
 For by some dreadful sorcery
 All was sealed close as it might be,
 And midst the marvels of that hall
 This Scholar found the end of all.

But in the town on that same night,
 An hour before the dawn of light,
 Such storm upon the place there fell,
 That not the oldest man could tell
 Of such another; and thereby
 The image was burnt utterly,

Being stricken from the clouds above;
And folk deemed that same bolt did move
The pavement where that wretched one
Unto his foredoomed fate had gone,
Because the plate was set again
Unto its place, and the great rain
Washed the earth down, and sorcery
Had hid the place where it did lie.

So soon the stones were set all straight;
But yet the folk, afraid of fate,
Where once the man of cornel-wood
Through many a year of bad and good
Had kept his place, set up alone
Great Jove himself, cut in white stone,
But thickly overlaid with gold.
'Which,' saith my tale, 'you may behold
Unto this day, although indeed
Some lord or other, being in need,
Took every ounce of gold away.'

But now, this tale in some past day
Being writ, I warrant all is gone,
Both gold and weather-beaten stone.

Be merry, masters, while ye may,
For men much quicker pass away.

LOVE IS ENOUGH

(Final Chorus)

[1873.]

Love is enough: ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further; come hither; there have
been who have found it,
And these know the House of Fulfilment
of Craving;
These know the Cup with the roses
around it,
These know the World's Wound and the
balm that hath bound it:
Cry out, the World heedeth not, "Love,
lead us home!"

He leadeth, He harkeneth, He cometh to
you-ward;

Set your faces as steel to the fears that
assemble

Round his goad for the faint, and his
scourge for the froward:

Lo his lips, how with tales of last kisses
they tremble!

Lo his eyes of all sorrow that may not
dissemble!

Cry out, for he heedeth, "O Love, lead us
home!"

O harken the words of his voice of com-
passion:

"Come cling round about me, ye faith-
ful who sicken

Of the weary unrest and the world's pass-
ing fashion!

As the rain in mid-morning your troubles
shall thicken,
But surely within you some Godhead
doth quicken,
As ye cry to me heeding, and leading you
home.

"Come—pain ye shall have, and be blind
to the ending!

Come—fear ye shall have, mid the sky's
overcasting!

Come—change ye shall have, for far are
ye wending!

Come—no crown ye shall have for your
thirst and your fasting,

But the kissed lips of Love and fair
life everlasting!

Cry out, for one heedeth, who leadeth you
home!"

Is he gone? was he with us?—ho ye who
seek saving,

Go no further; come hither; for have
we not found it?

Here is the House of Fulfilment of Crav-
ing;

Here is the Cup with the roses around
it;

The World's Wound well healed, and the
balm that hath bound it:

Cry out! for he heedeth, fair Love that
led home.

THE DAY IS COMING

[1885.]

Come hither, lads, and harken, for a tale
there is to tell,

Of the wonderful days a-coming, when
all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country,
a land in the midst of the sea,

And folk shall call it England in the
days that are going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the
days that are yet to come,

Shall have some hope of the morrow, some
joy of the ancient home.

For then, laugh not, but listen to this
strange tale of mine,

All folk that are in England shall be
better lodged than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him,
and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,

Nor yet come home in the even too faint
and weary to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work
and have no fear

For to-morrow's lack of earning and the
hunger-wolf anear.

I tell you this for a wonder, that no
man then shall be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch
at the work he had.

For that which the worker winneth shall
then be his indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by
him that sowed no seed.

O strange new wonderful justice! But
for whom shall we gather the grain?
For ourselves and for each of our fellows,
and no hand shall labor in vain.

Then all Mine and all Thine shall be Ours,
and no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to
fetter a friend for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us
when none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and
pinch and pine the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the
little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty,
and the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the
tombs of the mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels,
and the poet's teeming head;

And the painter's hand of wonder; and
the marvelous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music: all those
that do and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's;
nor shall any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the
days when the world grows fair.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But
what are the deeds of to-day,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that
wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting?
There are three words to speak;

WE WILL IT, and what is the foeman but
the dream-strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting?
while our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a
wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where
crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-
crushed, hungry hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sordid
grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those
props of England's pride.

They are gone; there is none can undo it,
nor save our souls from the curse;
But many a million cometh, and shall they
be better or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and
open wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and
the slow-foot hope of the poor,

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched,
and their unlearned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till
the waiting-tide be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the
living and the dead,
And o'er the weltering tangle a glim-
mering light is shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and
put by ease and rest,
For the Cause alone is worthy till the
good days bring the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no
man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his
deed shall still prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this,
at least, we know:
That the Dawn and the Day is coming,
and forth the Banners go.

best music - Lewis: alliteration repetition of some words - phrases

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

(1837-1909)

WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING

Chorus from Atalanta in Calydon

[1865.]

WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places

With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,

The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.
Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,

Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamour of waters, and with might;

Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,

Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,

Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?

O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,

Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!

For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;

For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,

And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,

And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,

The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten.

And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover

Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,

The faint fresh flame of the young year
flushes

From leaf to flower and flower to fruit:

And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,

But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

constant repetition of doublet phrase

BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS

Chorus from Atalanta in Calydon

[1865.]

BEFORE the beginning of years

There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;

Grief, with a glass that ran;

Pleasure, with pain for leaven;

Summer, with flowers that fell;

Remembrance fallen from heaven,

And madness risen from hell;

Strength without hands to smite;

Love that endures for a breath;

Night, the shadow of light,

And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand

Fire, and the falling of tears,

And a measure of sliding sand

From under the feet of the years;

And froth and drift of the sea;

And dust of the labouring earth;

And bodies of things to be

In the houses of death and of birth;

And wrought with weeping and laughter,

And fashioned with loathing and love

With life before and after

And death beneath and above,

For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a
span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life; *saturated*
Eyesight and speech they wrought *with*
For the veils of the soul therein, *subliminal*
A time for labour and thought,
A time to serve and to sin; *physically*
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travailleth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

[1866.]

BEFORE OUR lives divide for ever,
While time is with us and hands are
free,
(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever
Hand from hand, as we stand by the
sea)
I will say no word that a man might say
Whose whole life's love goes down in a
day;
For this could never have been: and never,
Though the gods and the years relent,
shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
To think of things that are well out-
worn?
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,
The dream foregone and the deed for-
borne?
Though joy be done with and grief be
vain,
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain:
Earth is not spoilt for a single shower:
But the rain has ruined the ungrown
corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my
heart,
Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.
The singing seasons divide and depart,
Winter and summer depart in twain.

It will grow not again, it is ruined at
root,
The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;
Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet
smart,
With sullen savour of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the
wine.

Had you eaten and drunken and found it
sweet,

This wild new growth of the corn and
vine,

This wine and bread without lees or leaven,
We had grown as gods, as the gods in
heaven,

Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of
things,

In the clamour and rumour of life to be,
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,

Covered with love as a covering tree,
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,

Filled from the heart to the lips with love,
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with
his wings,

O love, my love, had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and
moved

As the moon moves, loving the world;
and seen

Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean.

Twain halves of a perfect heart, made
fast

Soul to soul while the years fell past;
Had you loved me once, as you have not
loved;

Had the chance been with us that has not
been.

I have put my days and dreams out of
mind,

Days that are over, dreams that are
done.

Though we seek life through, we shall
surely find

There is none of them clear to us now,
not one.

But clear are these things: the grass and
the sand,

Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at
hand,

With lips wide open and face burnt blind,
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,

Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,
Works downward, sick of the sun and
the rain;

*Satiety, & impotent
weariness of the flesh.*

*quest of his passion
based on personal
& passion.*

No wind is rough with the rank rare
flowers;
The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,
Shudders and shines as the grey winds
gleam,
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,
Mother of mutable winds and hours,
A barren mother, a mother-maid,
'Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.
I would we twain were even as she,
Lost in the night and the light of the sea,
Where faint sounds falter and wan beams
wade,
Break, and are broken, and shed into
showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,
They are swift and sad, being born of
the sea.

Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,
Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;
Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon
earth.

I lose what I long for, save what I can,
My love, my love, and no love for me!

It is not much that a man can save
On the sands of life, in the straits of
time,

Who swims in sight of the great third
wave

That never a swimmer shall cross or
climb,

Some waif washed up with the strays and
spars

That ebb-tide shows to the shore and the
stars;

Weed from the water, grass from a grave,
A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme.

There will no man do for your sake, I think,
What I would have done for the least
word said.

I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,
Broken it up for your daily bread:

Body for body and blood for blood,

As the flow of the full sea risen to flood

That years and trembles before it sink,

I had given, and lain down for you, glad
and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,
And time at fullest and all his dower,

I had given you surely, and life to boot,

Were we once made one for a single
hour.

But now, you are twain, you are cloven
apart,

Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;
And deep in one is the bitter root,

And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for
you, clung
To my life if you bade me, played my
part

As it pleased you—these were the thoughts
that stung,

The dream that smote with a keener dart
Than shafts of love or arrows of death;
These were but as fire is, dust, or breath,
Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue
Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together to-day,
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,
Out of the world's way, out of the light,
Out of the ages of worldly weather,
Forgotten of all men altogether,
As the world's first dead, taken wholly
away,
Made one with death, filled full of the
night.

How we should slumber, how we should
sleep,

Far in the dark with the dreams and the
dews!

And dreaming, grow to each other, and
weep,

Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse;
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the
dream,

Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight;
For what shall it profit when men are
dead

To have dreamed, to have loved with the
whole soul's might,

To have looked for day when the day
was fled?

Let come what will, there is one thing
worth,

To have had fair love in the life upon
earth:

To have held love safe till the day grew
night,

While skies had colour and lips were red.

Would I lose you now? would I take you
then,

If I lose you now that my heart has
need?

And come what may after death to men,
What thing worth this will the dead years
breed?

Lose life, lose all: but at least I know,
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,
Had I reached you on earth, I should lose
not again,

In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once
sealed mine,

Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the
breath,

Mixed into me as honey in wine,
Not time, that sayeth and gainsayeth,
Nor all strong things had severed us then;
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,
Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,
Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,
You had grown strong as the sun or the
sea.

But none shall triumph a whole life
through:

For death is one, and the fates are three.
At the door of life, by the gate of breath,
There are worse things waiting for men
than death;

Death could not sever my soul and you,
As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to the chance
they sent you,

Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer,
But will it not one day in heaven repent
you?

Will they solace you wholly, the days that
were?

Will you lift up your eyes between sadness
and bliss,

Meet mine, and see where the great love is,
And tremble and turn and be changed?

Content you;
The gate is strait; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched
hand,

Had you seen good such a thing were
done,

I too might have stood with the souls that
stand

In the sun's sight, clothed with the light
of the sun;

But who now on earth need care how I live?
Have the high gods anything left to give,

Save dust and laurels and gold and sand?
Which gifts are goodly: but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,

There is none of you, none, that shall
comfort me.

My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked
and whirled

Round and round in a gulf of the sea;

And still, through the sound and the strain-
ing stream,

Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a
dream,

The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,
And strange swift eyes where the soul
sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,
Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.

Would I have you change now, change at
a blow,

Startled and stricken, awake and aware?

Yea, if I could, would I have you see

My very love of you filling me,

And know my soul to the quick, as I know

The likeness and look of your throat and
hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I
might,

Would I change my sweet one love with
a word?

I had rather your hair should change in a
night,

Clear now as the plume of a black bright
bird;

Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn grey,
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.

I will keep my soul in a place out of
sight,

Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,

Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.

I have woven a veil for the weeping face,
Whose lips have drunken the wine of
tears:

I have found a way for the failing feet,

A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;

There is no rumour about the place,

Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and
said

"Let none take pity upon thee, none

Comfort thy crying; for lo, thou art dead,
Lie still now, safe out of sight of the
sun.

Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought
Thy grave-clothes on thee of grievous
thought,

With soft spun verses and tears unshed,
And sweet light visions of things undone?

"I have given thee garments and balm and
myrrh,

And gold, and beautiful burial things.

But thou, be at peace now, make no stir;
Is not thy grave as a royal king's?

Fret not thyself though the end were
sore;

Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.

Sleep, what hast thou to do with her?

The eyes that weep, with the mouth
that sings?"

Where the dead red leaves of the years
lie rotten,

The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown
by,

The misconceived and the misbegotten,

I would find a sin to do ere I die,

Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,
That would set you higher in heaven, serve
you

And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,
As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns
through me,

I am swift to follow you, keen to see;
But love lacks might to redeem or undo
me;

As I have been, I know I shall surely
be;

"What should such fellows as I do?" Nay,
My part were worse if I chose to play:
For the worst is this after all; if they
knew me,

Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these; but you,
If you saw with your soul what man
am I,

You would praise me at least that my soul
all through

Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie;
The souls and lips that are bought and
sold,

The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,
The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,
The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear; that may
be;

But I, that I love you and find you fair,
Who are more than fair in my eyes if they
be,

Do the high gods know or the great
gods care?

Though the swords in my heart for one
were seven,

Would the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,
That knows not itself whether night-time or
day be,

Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.

I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her and mix her
with me;

Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast:
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and
the rain,

Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like
wine,

Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine
Wrought without hand in a world with-
out stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving
ships,

Change as the winds change, veer in the
tide;

My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee
subside;

Sleep, and not know if she be, if she
were,

Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips
With splendid summer and perfume and
pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
Were it once cast off and unwound from
me,

Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green and crowned with
the foam,

A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
A vein in the heart of the streams of
the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,
Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men
say.

Thou hast taken, and shalt not render
again;

Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as
they.

But death is the worst that comes of thee;
Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O
sea,

But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or
when,

Having given us love, hast thou taken
away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,
Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine
heart.

The hopes that hurt and the dreams that
hover,

Shall they not vanish away and apart?

But thou, thou art sure, thou art older
than earth;

Thou art strong for death and fruitful of
birth;

Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs dis-
cover;

From the first thou wert; in the end
thou art.

And grief shall endure not for ever, I
know.

As things that are not shall these things
be;

We shall live through seasons of sun and
of snow,

And none be grievous as this to me.

We shall hear, as one in a trance that
hears,
The sound of time, the rhyme of the
years;
Wrecked hope and passionate pain will
grow
As tender things of a spring-tide sea.

Sea-fruit that swings in the waves that
hiss,
Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.
And all time past, was it all for this?
Times unforgotten, and treasures of
things?
Swift years of liking and sweet long
laughter,
That wist not well of the years thereafter
Till love woke, smitten at heart by a
kiss,
With lips that trembled and trailing
wings?

There lived a singer in France of old
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
There shone one woman, and none but
she.

And finding life for her love's sake fail,
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,
Touched land, and saw her as life grew
cold,
And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace:
For she bowed down to him weeping,
and said

"Live;" and her tears were shed on his
face

Or ever the life in his face was shed.
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and
stung
Once, and her close lips touched him and
clung
Once, and grew one with his lips for a
space;
And so drew back, and the man was
dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.
Sleep, and be glad while the world en-
dures.

Be well content as the years wear through;
Give thanks for life, and the loves and
lures;
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death.
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her
breath,

For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,
Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest, and be glad of the gods; but I,
How shall I praise them, or how take
rest?

There is not room under all the sky
For me that know not of worst or best,
Dream or desire of the days before,
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.

Love will not come to me now though I
die,
As love came close to you, breast to
breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses;
I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note
grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,
As a wave of the sea turned back by
song.

There are sounds where the soul's delight
takes fire,
Face to face with its own desire;
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;
I shall hate sweet music my whole life
long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
The heavens that murmur, the sounds
that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that
thunder,

The music burning at heart like wine,
An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder —
These things are over, and no more
mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard
Once, ere my love and my heart were at
strife;

Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,
Balm of the wound and heft of the
knife.

Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,
Now time has done with his one sweet
word.

The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
Fill' the days of my daily breath
With fugitive things not good to treasure,
Do as the world doth, say as it saith;
But if we had loved each other — O sweet,
Had you felt, lying under the palms of
your feet,

The heart of my heart, beating harder with
pleasure

To feel you tread it to dust and death —

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given
All that life gives and the years let go,
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,
The dreams reared high and the hopes
brought low?

Come life, come death, not a word be
said;

Should I lose you living, and vex you
dead?

I never shall tell you on earth; and in
heaven,

If I cry to you then, will you hear or
know?

A LEAVE-TAKING

[1866.]

LET us go hence, my songs: she will not hear.

Let us go hence together without fear;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.

Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of seamen sand and foam; what help is here?

There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence: she will not weep.

We gave love many dreams and days to keep,
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle, and reap."

All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow:
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest: she will not love,
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.

Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down: she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,

And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;

Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence: she will not see.
Sing all once more together; surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,

We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.

Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,

She would not see.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH)

[1866.]

VICISTI, GALILÆE

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;

Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.

Thou art more than the day or the morrow,
the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou,
Proserpina, sleep.

Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;

But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.

Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,

A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?

I am sick of singing; the bays burn deep and chafe; I am fain

To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.

For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,

We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.

O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!

From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.

New Gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken your rods;

They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.

But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;

Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.

Time and the Gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof,

Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.

I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,

Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease,

Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,

The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breasts of the nymphs in the brake:

Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;

And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;

All the feet of the hours that sound as a
 single lyre,
 Dropped and deep in the flowers, with
 strings that flicker like fire.
 More than these wilt thou give, things
 fairer than all these things?
 Nay, for a little we live, and life hath
 mutable wings.
 A little while and we die: shall life not
 thrive as it may?
 For no man under the sky lives twice, out-
 living his day.
 And grief is a grievous thing, and a man
 hath enough of his tears:
 Why should he labour, and bring fresh
 grief to blacken his years?
 Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the
 world has grown grey from thy breath;
 We have drunken of things Lethean, and
 fed on the fullness of death.
 Laurel is green for a season, and love is
 sweet for a day;
 But love grows bitter with treason, and
 laurel outlives not May.
 Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the
 world is not sweet in the end;
 For the old faiths loosen and fall, the
 new years ruin and rend.
 Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul
 is a rock that abides;
 But her ears are vexed with the roar and
 her face with the foam of the tides.
 O lips that the live blood faints in, the
 leavings of racks and rods!
 O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of
 gibbeted Gods!
 Though all men abase them before you in
 spirit, and all knees bend,
 I kneel not neither adore you, but stand-
 ing, look to the end.
 All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits
 and sorrows are cast
 Far out with the foam of the present that
 sweeps to the surf of the past:
 Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and
 between the remote sea-gates,
 Waste water washes, and tall ships founder,
 and deep death waits:
 Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad
 about with the seas as with wings,
 And impelled of invisible tides, and ful-
 filled of unspeakable things,
 White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-
 toothed and serpentine-curved,
 Rolls, under the whitening wind of the
 future, the wave of the world.
 The depths stand naked in sunder behind it,
 the storms flee away;
 In the hollow before it the thunder is
 taken and snared as a prey;
 In its sides is the north-wind bound: and
 its salt is of all men's tears;
 With light of ruin, and sound of changes,
 and pulse of years:

With travail of day after day, and with
 trouble of hour upon hour;
 And bitter as blood is the spray; and the
 crests are as fangs that devour:
 And its vapour and storm of its steam as
 the sighing of spirits to be;
 And its noise as the noise in a dream; and
 its depth as the roots of the sea:
 And the height of its heads as the height
 of the utmost stars of the air:
 And the ends of the earth at the might
 thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
 Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will
 ye chasten the high sea with rods?
 Will ye take her to chain her with chains,
 who is older than all ye Gods?
 All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire
 shall ye pass and be past:
 Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and
 the waves be upon you at last.
 In the darkness of time, in the deeps of
 the years, in the changes of things,
 Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and
 the world shall forget you for kings.
 Though the feet of thine high priests tread
 where thy lords and our forefathers
 trod,
 Though these that were Gods are dead, and
 thou being dead art a God,
 Though before thee the throned Cytherean
 be fallen, and hidden her head.
 Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy
 dead shall go down to thee dead.
 Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a
 goddess with grace clad around;
 Thou art throned where another was king;
 where another was queen she is
 crowned.
 Yea, once we had sight of another; but
 now she is queen, say these.
 Not as thine, not as thine was our mother,
 a blossom of flowering seas,
 Clothed round with the world's desire as
 with raiment, and fair as the foam,
 And fleetier than kindled fire, and a god-
 dess, and mother of Rome.
 For thine came pale and a maiden, and
 sister to sorrow; but ours,
 Her deep hair heavily laden with odour
 and colour of flowers,
 White rose of the rose-white water, a silver
 splendour, a flame,
 Bent down unto us that besought her, and
 earth grew sweet with her name.
 For thine came weeping, a slave among
 slaves, and rejected; but she
 Came flushed from the full-flushed wave,
 and imperial, her foot on the sea.
 And the wonderful waters knew her, the
 winds and the viewless ways,
 And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the
 sea-blue stream of the bays.

Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token?
we wist that ye should not fall.

Ye were all so fair that are broken; and
one more fair than ye all.

But I turn to her still, having seen she
shall surely abide in the end;

Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me
now and befriend.

O daughter of earth, of my mother, her
crown and blossom of birth,

I am also, I also, thy brother: I go as I
came unto earth.

In the night where thine eyes are as moons
are in heaven, the night where thou
art,

Where the silence is more than all tunes,
where sleep overflows from the heart,

Where the poppies are sweet as the rose
in our world, and the red rose is white,

And the wind falls faint as it blows with
the fume of the flowers of the night,

And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the
shadow of Gods from afar

Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the
deep dim soul of a star,

In the sweet low light of thy face, under
heavens untrod by the sun,

Let my soul with their souls find place,
and forget what is done and undone.

Thou art more than the Gods who number
the days of our temporal breath;

For these give labour and slumber; but
thou, Proserpina, death.

Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a
season in silence. I know

I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as
they sleep; even so.

For the glass of the years is brittle wherein
we gaze for a span;

A little soul for a little bears up this corpse
which is man.

So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not
again, neither weep.

For there is no God found stronger than
death; and death is a sleep.

A MATCH

[1866.]

If love were what the rose is,

And I were like the leaf,

Our lives would grow together

In sad or singing weather,

Blown fields or flowerful closes,

Green pleasure or grey grief;

If love were what the rose is,

And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,

And love were like the tune,

With double sound and single

Delight our tips would mingle,

With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

[1866.]

BACK to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;
All things come back to her, being free,—
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year;

*shall it
be singing
to morning.*

Shall never smile and turn and rest
 On mine as there,
 Nor one most sacred hand be pressed
 Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
 Half run before;
 The youngest to the oldest singer
 That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
 Till all grief end,
 In holiest age our mightiest mind,
 Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,
 If hope there be,
 O spirit that man's life left pure,
 Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
 Look earthward now:
 Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
 The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
 Where thou art not
 We find none like thee. Time and strife
 And the world's lot

Move thee no more; but love at least,
 And reverent heart,
 May move thee, royal and released
 Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
 Receive and keep,
 Keep safe his dedicated dust,
 His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
 Mix with thy name
 As morning-star with evening-star
 His faultless fame.

BEFORE DAWN

[1866.]

SWEET life, if life were stronger,
 Earth clear of years that wrong her,
 Then two things might live longer,
 Two sweeter things than they;
 Delight, the rootless flower,
 And love, the bloomless bower;
 Delight that lives an hour,
 And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,
 When April melts in Maytime,
 Love lengthens out his playtime,
 Love lessens breath by breath,
 And kiss by kiss grows older
 On listless throat or shoulder
 Turned sideways now, turned colder
 Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
 Life gave, and seemed worth living;
 Sin sweet beyond forgiving
 And brief beyond regret:
 To laugh and love together
 And weave with foam and feather
 And wind and words the tether
 Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,
 One thread in life worth spinning,
 Ah sweet, one sin worth sinning
 With all the whole soul's will;
 To lull you till one stilled you,
 To kiss you till one killed you,
 To feed you till one filled you,
 Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him
 Between white arms and bosom,
 Between the bud and blossom,
 Between your throat and chin;
 To say of shame—what is it?
 Of virtue—we can miss it,
 Of sin—we can but kiss it,
 And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken
 Through fleshly pulses, quicken
 Beneath sweet sighs that thicken,
 Soft hands and lips that smite;
 Lips that no love can tire,
 With hands that sting like fire,
 Weaving the web Desire
 To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
 Our love with torch unlighted,
 Paused near us unafrighted,
 Who found and left him free;
 None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
 Will weep or laugh or wonder;
 Light love stands clear of thunder,
 And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning
 Of dying lights and dawning,
 Night murmurs to the morning,
 "Lie still, O love, lie still;"
 And half her dark limbs cover
 The white limbs of her lover,
 With amorous plumes that hover
 And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses
 Night's void and vain caresses,
 And from her clouddier tresses
 Unwinds the gold of his,
 With limbs from limbs dividing
 And breath by breath subsiding;
 For love has no abiding,
 But dies before the kiss;

So hath it been, so be it;
 For who shall live and flee it?
 But look that no man see it
 Or hear it unaware;

Lest all who love and choose him
 See Love, and so refuse him;
 For all who find him lose him,
 But all have found him fair.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

[1866.]

HERE, where the world is quiet;
 Here, where all trouble seems
 Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
 In doubtful dreams of dreams;
 I watch the green field growing
 For reaping folk and sowing,
 For harvest-time and mowing,
 A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
 And men that laugh and weep;
 Of what may come hereafter
 For men that sow to reap:
 I am weary of days and hours,
 Blown buds of barren flowers,
 Desires and dreams and powers
 And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,
 And far from eye or ear
 Wan waves and wet winds labour,
 Weak ships and spirits steer;
 They drive adrift, and whither
 They wot not who make thither;
 But no such winds blow hither,
 And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
 No heather-flower or vine,
 But bloomless buds of poppies,
 Green grapes of Proserpine,
 Pale beds of blowing rushes
 Where no leaf blooms or blushes
 Save this whereout she crushes
 For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
 In fruitless fields of corn,
 They bow themselves and slumber
 All night till light is born;
 And like a soul belated,
 In hell and heaven unmated,
 By cloud and mist abated
 Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
 He too with death shall dwell,
 Nor wake with wings in heaven,
 Nor weep for pains in hell;
 Though one were fair as roses,
 His beauty clouds and closes;
 And well though love reposes,
 In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
 Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
 Who gathers all things mortal
 With cold immortal hands;

Her languid lips are sweeter
 Than love's who fears to greet her
 To men that mix and meet her
 From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
 She waits for all men born;
 Forgets the earth her mother,
 The life of fruits and corn;
 And spring and seed and swallow
 Take wing for her and follow
 Where summer song rings hollow
 And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
 The old loves with wearier wings;
 And all dead years draw thither,
 And all disastrous things;
 Dead dreams of days forsaken,
 Blind buds that snows have shaken,
 Wild leaves that winds have taken,
 Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
 And joy was never sure;
 To-day will die to-morrow;
 Time stoops to no man's lure;
 And love, grown faint and fretful,
 With lips but half regretful
 Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
 Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
 From hope and fear set free,
 We thank with brief thanksgiving
 Whatever gods may be
 That no life lives for ever;
 That dead men rise up never;
 That even the weariest river
 Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
 Nor any change of light:
 Nor sound of waters shaken,
 Nor any sound or sight:
 Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
 Nor days nor things diurnal;
 Only the sleep eternal
 In an eternal night.

HESPERIA

[1866.]

Out of the golden remote wild west where
 the sea without shore is,
 Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with
 the fulness of joy,
 As a wind sets in with the autumn that
 blows from the region of stories,
 Blows with a perfume of songs and of
 memories beloved from a boy,
 Blows from the capes of the past oversea
 to the bays of the present,
 Filled as with shadow of sound with the
 pulse of invisible feet,

Far out to the shallows and straits of the
 future, by rough ways or pleasant,
 Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it
 hither to me, O my sweet?
 For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-
 wind blowing in with the water,
 Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the
 wind from the west,
 Straight from the sunset, across white
 waves whence rose as a daughter
 Venus thy mother, in years when the
 world was a water at rest.
 Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream
 that abides after slumber,
 Strayed from the fugitive flock of the
 night, when the moon overhead
 Wanes in the wan waste heights of the
 heaven, and stars without number
 Die without sound, and are spent like
 lamps that are burnt by the dead,
 Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me
 with touch of forgotten caresses,
 One warm dream clad about with a fire
 as of life that endures;
 The delight of thy face, and the sound of
 thy feet, and the wind of thy tresses,
 And all of a man that regrets, and all of
 a maid that allures.
 But thy bosom is warm for my face and
 profound as a manifold flower,
 Thy silence as music, thy voice as an
 odour that fades in a flame;
 Not a dream, not a dream is the kiss of
 thy mouth, and the bountiful hour
 That makes me forget what was sin, and
 would make me forget were it shame.
 Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that
 are tender, thy lips that are loving,
 Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn
 of a moon like a dream;
 And my heart yearns baffled and blind,
 moved vainly toward thee, and moving
 As the reflux seaweed moves in the lan-
 guid exuberant stream,
 Fair as a rose is on earth, as a rose under
 water in prison,
 That stretches and swings to the slow
 passionate pulse of the sea,
 Closed up from the air and the sun, but
 alive, as a ghost rearsen,
 Pale as the love that revives as a ghost
 rearsen in me.
 From the bountiful infinite west, from the
 happy memorial places
 Full of the stately repose and the lordly
 delight of the dead,
 Where the fortunate islands are lit with
 the light of ineffable faces,
 And the sound of a sea without wind is
 about them, and sunset is red,
 Come back to redeem and release me from
 love that recalls and represses,

That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till
 the serpent has eaten his fill;
 From the bitter delights of the dark, and
 the feverish, the furtive caresses
 That murder the youth in a man or ever
 his heart have its will.
 Thy lips cannot laugh and thine eyes can-
 not weep; thou art pale as a rose is,
 Paler and sweeter than leaves that cover
 the blush of the bud;
 And the heart of the flower is compas-
 sion, and pity the core it encloses,
 Pity, not love, that is born of the breath
 and decays with the blood.
 As the cross that a wild nun clasps till the
 edge of it bruises her bosom,
 So love wounds as we grasp it, and
 blackens and burns as a flame;
 I have loved overmuch in my life; when
 the live bud bursts with the blossom,
 Bitter as ashes or tears is the fruit, and
 the wine thereof shame.
 As a heart that its anguish divides is the
 green bud cloven asunder;
 As the blood of a man self-slain is the
 flush of the leaves that allure;
 And the perfume as poison and wine to
 the brain, a delight and a wonder;
 And the thorns are too sharp for a boy,
 too slight for a man, to endure.
 Too soon did I love it, and lost love's rose;
 and I cared not for glory's:
 Only the blossoms of sleep and of pleas-
 ure were mixed in my hair.
 Was it myrtle or poppy thy garland was
 woven with, O my Dolores?
 Was it pallor of slumber, or blush as of
 blood, that I found in thee fair?
 For desire is a respite from love, and the
 flesh not the heart is her fuel;
 She was sweet to me once, who am fled
 and escaped from the rage of her reign;
 Who behold as of old time at hand as I
 turn, with her mouth growing cruel,
 And flushed as with wine with the blood
 of her lovers, Our Lady of Pain.
 Low down where the thicket is thicker with
 thorns than with leaves in the summer,
 In the brake is a gleaming of eyes and a
 hissing of tongues that I knew;
 And the lithe long throats of her snakes
 reach round her, their mouths overcome
 her,
 And her lips grow cool with their foam,
 made moist as a desert with dew.
 With the thirst and the hunger of lust
 though her beautiful lips be so bitter,
 With the cold foul foam of the snakes
 they soften and redden and smile;
 And her fierce mouth sweetens, her eyes
 wax wide and her eyelashes glitter,
 And she laughs with a savour of blood
 in her face, and a savour of guile.

She laughs, and her hands reach hither, her
 hair blows hither and hisses,
 As a low-lit flame in a wind, back-blown
 till it shudder and leap;
 Let her lips not again lay hold on my soul,
 nor her poisonous kisses,
 To consume it alive and divide from thy
 bosom, Our Lady of Sleep.
 Ah daughter of sunset and slumber, if now
 it return into prison,
 Who shall redeem it anew? but we, if
 thou wilt, let us fly;
 Let us take to us, now that the white
 skies thrill with a moon unarisen,
 Swift horses of fear or of love, take
 flight and depart and not die.
 They are swifter than dreams, they are
 stronger than death; there is none that
 hath ridden,
 None that shall ride in the dim strange
 ways of his life as we ride;
 By the meadows of memory, the highlands
 of hope, and the shore that is hidden,
 Where life breaks loud and unseen, a
 sonorous invisible tide;
 By the sands where sorrow has trodden,
 the salt pools bitter and sterile,
 By the thundering reef and the low sea-
 wall and the channel of years,
 Our wild steeds press on the night, strain
 hard through pleasure and peril,
 Labour and listen and pant not or pause
 for the peril that nears;
 And the sound of them trampling the way
 cleaves night as an arrow asunder,
 And slow by the sand-hill and swift by
 the down with its glimpses of grass,
 Sudden and steady the music, as eight
 hoofs trample and thunder,
 Rings in the ear of the low blind wind of
 the night as we pass;
 Shrill shrieks in our faces the blind bland
 air that was mute as a maiden,
 Stung into storm by the speed of our
 passage, and deaf where we past;
 And our spirits too burn as we bound,
 thine holy but mine heavy-laden,
 As we burn with the fire of our flight;
 ah love, shall we win at the last?

most successful *phallos*
 SAPPHICS

[1866.]

ALL the night sleep came not upon my eye-
 lids,
 Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a
 feather,
 Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of
 iron
 Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
 Came without sleep over the seas and
 touched me,

Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and
 I too,
 Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
 Saw the hair unbound and the feet un-
 sandalled
 Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
 Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves
 that drew her,
 Looking always, looking with necks re-
 verted,
 Back to Lesbos, back to the hills where-
 under
 Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind
 her
 Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
 As the thunder flung from the strong
 unclosing
 Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with
 awful
 Sound of feet and thunder of wings around
 her;
 While behind a clamour of singing women
 Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
 All the Loves wept, listening; sick with
 anguish,
 Stood the crowned nine Muses about
 Apollo;

Fear was upon them,
 While the tenth sang wonderful things
 they knew not.
 Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were
 silent,
 None endured the sound of her song for
 weeping;

Laurel by laurel,
 Faded all their crowns; but about her
 forehead,
 Round her woven tresses and ashen tem-
 ples
 White as dead snow, paler than grass in
 summer,

Ravaged with kisses,
 Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
 Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
 Paused, and almost wept; such a song was
 that song,
 Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my
 Sappho;"
 Yet she turned her face from the Loves,
 she saw not
 Tears for laughter darken immortal eye-
 lids,
 Heard not about her

poem in foreign metre - consummate art.

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken
raiment,

Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their
smitten

Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound
of lute-strings,

Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her
chosen,

Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whis-
pers,

Full of music; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding pas-
sion,

Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and
scattered

Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;

Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden
faces

Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were
silent;

Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was
that song.

All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was
barren,

Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged
at sunset,

Lulled at the dewfall,

By the grey sea-side, unassuaged, unheard-
of,

Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears,
and singing

Songs that move the heart of the shaken
heaven,

Songs that break the heart of the earth
with pity,

Hearing, to hear them.

DEDICATION:

TO POEMS AND BALLADS

[1866.]

THE sea gives her shells to the shingle,
The earth gives her streams to the sea;
They are many, but my gift is single,
My verses, the firstfruits of me.

Let the wind take the green and the grey
leaf

Cast forth without fruit upon air;
Take rose-leaf and vine-leaf and bay-leaf
Blown loose from the hair.

The night shakes them round me in legions,
Dawn drives them before her like
dreams;

Time sheds them like snows on strange
regions

Swept shoreward on infinite streams;
Leaves pallid and sombre and ruddy,
Dead fruits of the fugitive years;
Some stained as with wine and made
bloody,
And some as with tears.

Some scattered in seven years' traces,
As they fell from the boy that was
then;

Long left among idle green places,
Or gathered but now among men;
On seas full of wonder and peril,
Blown white round the capes of the
north;

Or in islands where myrtles are sterile
And loves bring not forth.

O daughters of dreams and of stories
That life is not wearied of yet,
Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,
Félise and Yolande and Juliette,
Shall I find you not still, shall I miss
you,

When sleep, that is true or that seems,
Comes back to me hopeless to kiss you,
O daughters of dreams?

They are past as a slumber that passes,
As the dew of a dawn of old time;
More frail than the shadows on glasses,
More fleet than a wave or a rhyme.
As the waves after ebb drawing seaward,
When their hollows are full of the night
So the birds that flew singing to me-ward
Recede out of sight.

The songs of dead seasons, that wander
On wings of articulate words;
Lost leaves that the shore-wind may
squander
Light flocks of untameable birds;

Some sang to me dreaming in class-time
And truant in hand as in tongue;
For the youngest were born of boy's pas-
time,
The eldest are young.

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,
Is there hearing for songs that recede,
Tunes touched from a harp with man's
fingers

Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed?
Is there place in the land of your labour,
Is there room in your world of delight,
Where change has not sorrow for neigh-
bour

And day has not night?

In their wings though the sea-wind yet
quivers
Will you spare not a space for them
there

Made green with the running of rivers
And gracious with temperate air;
In the fields and the turreted cities,
That cover from sunshine and rain
Fair passions and bountiful pities
And loves without stain?

In a land of clear colours and stories,
In a region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories
And a murmur of musical flowers;
In the woods where the spring half un-
covers

The flush of her amorous face,
By the waters that listen for lovers,
For these is there place?

For the song-birds of sorrow, that muffle
Their music as clouds do their fire:
For the storm-birds of passion, that ruffle
Wild wings in a wind of desire;
In the stream of the storm as it settles
Blown seaward, borne far from the sun,
Shaken loose on the darkness like petals
Dropt one after one?

Though the world of your hands be more
gracious

And the lovelier in lordship of things
Clothed round by sweet art with the
spacious

Warm heaven of her imminent wings,
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,
For the love of old loves and lost times;
And receive in your palace of painting
This revel of rhymes.

Though the seasons of man full of losses
Make empty the years full of youth,
If but one thing be constant in crosses,
Change lays not her hand upon truth;
Hopes die, and their tombs are for token
That the grief as the joy of them ends
Ere time that breaks all men has broken
The faith between friends.

Though the many lights dwindle to one
light,

There is help if the heaven has one;
Though the skies be discrowned of the
sunlight

And the earth dispossessed of the sun,
They have moonlight and sleep for repay-
ment,

When, refreshed as a bride and set free,
With stars and sea-winds in her raiment,
Night sinks on the sea.

MATER DOLOROSA

[1871.]

Citoyen, lui dit Enjolras, ma mère, c'est la Ré-
publique. — Les Misérables.

WHO is it that sits by the way, by the
wild wayside,

In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a
cast-off bride,

In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with
soiled feet bare,

With the night for a garment upon her,
with torn wet hair?

She is fairer of face than the daughters
of men, and her eyes,

Worn through with her tears, are deep as
the depth of skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen,
for whose abject sake,
Earth groans in the blackness of darkness,
and men's hearts break.

This is she for whose love, having seen
her, the men that were

Poured life out as water, and shed their
souls upon air.

This is she for whose glory their years
were counted as foam;

Whose face was a light upon Greece, was
a fire upon Rome.

Is it now not surely a vain thing, a foolish
and vain,

To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve
her, partake in the pain?

She is gray with the dust of time on his
manifold ways,

Where her faint feet stumble and falter
through yearlong days.

Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit
or give fame,

Who herself is a name despised, a rejected
name?

We have not served her for guerdon. If
any do so,

That his mouth may be sweet with such
honey, we care not to know.

We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened,
a perilous cup,

A draught very bitter. The kings of the
earth stood up,

And the rulers took counsel together, to
smite her and slay;
And the blood of her wounds is given us
to drink to-day.
Can these bones live? or the leaves that
are dead leaves bud?
Or the dead blood drawn from her veins
be in your veins blood?
Will ye gather up water again that was
drawn and shed?
In the blood is the life of the veins, and
her veins are dead.
For the lives that are over are over, and
past things past;
She had her day, and it is not; was first,
and is last.

Is it nothing unto you, then, all ye that
pass by,
If her breath be left in her lips, if she live
now or die?
Behold now, O people, and say if she be
not fair,
Whom your fathers followed to find her,
with praise and prayer,
And rejoiced, having found her, though
roof they had none, nor bread.
But ye care not: what is it to you if her
day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their sound
was in all men's lands;
There was fire in their hearts, and the
hunger of fight in their hands.
Naked and strong they went forth in her
strength like flame,
For her love's and her name's sake of old,
her republican name.
But their children, by kings made quiet,
by priests made wise,
Love better the heat of their hearths than
the light of her eyes.

Are they children of these thy children
indeed, who have sold,
O golden goddess, the light of thy face
for gold?
Are they sons indeed of the sons of thy
dayspring of hope,
Whose lives are in fief of an emperor,
whose souls of a Pope?
Hide then thine head, O beloved! thy time
is done;
Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, and
blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream she
indeed shall rise,
When the hopes are dead in her heart as
the tears in her eyes?
If ye sing of her dead, will she stir? if
ye weep for her, weep?
Come away now, leave her: what hath she
to do but sleep?

But ye that mourn are alive, and have
years to be;
And life is good, and the world is wiser
than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with
years to give,
And years to promise; but how long now
shall it live?
And foolish and poor is faith, and her
ways are bare,
Till she find the way of the sun, and the
morning air.
In that hour shall this dead face shine as
the face of the sun,
And the soul of man and her soul and the
world's be one.

FROM MATER TRIUMPHALIS

[TO LIBERTY.]

[1871.]

I am thine harp between thine hands, O
mother!
All my strong chords are strained with
love of thee.
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each
with other
Wrestle the wind and the reluctant
sea.

I am no courtier of the sober-suited,
Who loves a little for a little pay.
Me not thy winds and storms, nor thrones
disrooted,
Nor molten crowns, nor thine own sins,
dismay.

Sinned has thou sometime, therefore art
thou sinless;
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore
without stain;
Even as a man's soul is kin to thee, but
kinless
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the
all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful
mother!
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy
grace.
How were it with me then, if ever another
Should come to stand before thee in this
my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion,
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;
The graves of souls born worms, and creeds
grown carrion
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of
death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are
thunders,
And I, beneath thy foot, the pedal prest;
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night
sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sealine;
But thou from dawn to sunseting shalt
cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that
lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth
and error,
Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and
screams
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror
The imperious heaven's inevitable ex-
tremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;
I keep no time of song with gold-perched
singers
And chirp of linnets on the wrists of
kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that
darken,
Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy
bark
To port through night and tempest: if thou
hearken,
My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy
morning,
My cry is up before the day for thee;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and
give warning,
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and
feathered fairer,
To see in summer what I see in spring:
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O
thunder-bearer,
And they shall be who shall have tongues
to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and
part not
From thine unnavigable and wingless
way;
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou
art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy
day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,
With wind-notes as of eagles Æscylean,
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and
daughters,
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep
but one,—
That supreme song which shook the chan-
nelled waters,
And called thee skyward as God calls
the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above
thee;
Though death before thee come to clear
thy sky;
Let us but see in this thy face who love
thee;
Yea, though thou slay us, arise, and let
us die.

COR CORDIUM

[1871.]

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's
fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the
bounty of bloom;
O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear
desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his
tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's
room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;
O heart whose beating blood was running
song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own
songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be
free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's
sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

HERTHA

[1871.]

I AM that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of
them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches,
I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
 First drifted and swam;
 Out of me are the forces
 That save it or damn;
 Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast
 and bird; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
 Nought is there to go;
 Love or unlove me,
 Unknow me or know,
 I am that which unloves me and loves; I
 am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
 And the arrows that miss,
 I the mouth that is kissed
 And the breath in the kiss,
 The search, and the sought, and the seeker,
 the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
 My spirit elate;
 That which caresses
 With hands uncreate
 My limbs unbegotten that measure the
 length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
 Looking Godward, to cry
 "I am I, thou art thou,
 I am low, thou art high"?
 I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him;
 find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
 The plough-cloven clod
 And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
 The germ and the sod,
 The deed and the doer, the seed and the
 sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
 Child, underground?
 Fire that impassioned thee,
 Iron that bound,
 Dim changes of water, what thing of all
 these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
 Thou hast seen with thine eyes
 With what cunning of art
 Thou wast wrought in what wise,
 By what force of what stuff thou wast
 shapen, and shown on my breast to
 the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
 Knowledge of me?
 Hath the wilderness told it thee?
 Hast thou learnt of the sea?
 Hast thou communed in spirit with night?
 have the winds taken counsel with
 thee?

Have I set such a star
 To show light on thy brow
 That thou sawest from afar
 What I show to thee now?
 Have ye spoken as brethren together, the
 sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
 What was, hast thou known?
 Prophet nor poet
 Nor tripod nor throne
 Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but
 only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
 Born, and not made;
 Though her children forsake her,
 Allured or afraid,
 Praying prayers to the God of their fashion,
 she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
 And a crown is of night;
 But this thing is God,
 To be man with thy might,
 To grow straight in the strength of thy
 spirit, and live out thy life as the
 light.

I am in thee to save thee,
 As my soul in thee saith;
 Give thou as I gave thee,
 Thy life-blood and breath,
 Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers
 of thy thought, and red fruit of thy
 death.

Be the ways of thy giving
 As mine were to thee;
 The free life of thy living,
 Be the gift of it free;
 Not as servant to lord, nor as master to
 slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
 Souls overcast,
 Were the lights ye see vanish meant
 Always to last,
 Ye would know not the sun overshadowing
 the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
 The dim paths of the night
 Set the shadow called God
 In your skies to give light;
 But the morning of manhood is risen, and
 the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
 That swells to the sky
 With frondage red-fruited,
 The life-tree am I;
 In the buds of your lives is the sap of my
 leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive
They are worms that are bred in the bark
that falls off; they shall die and not
live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sun-
rise shall tread out their fires as a
spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other
ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rus-
tles, and branches are bent with his
tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses,
ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and
language of storm-clouds on earth-
shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and
all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings
above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets
of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours
When my mind was as May's,
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood,
shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect
with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me,
beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you,
to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are
red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Towards Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and
of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are
white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown grey from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken,
the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds
upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
 Truth only is whole,
 And the love of his giving
 Man's polestar and pole;
 Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my
 body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
 One beam of mine eye;
 One topmost blossom
 That scales the sky;
 Man, equal and one with me, man that is
 made of me, man that is I.

THE PILGRIMS

[1871.]

"Who is your lady of love, O ye that pass
 Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which
 was

That ye sing sadly, or dream of what
 shall be?

For gladly at once and sadly it seems
 ye sing."

—"Our lady of love by you is un beholden;
 For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor
 lips, nor golden

Treasure of hair, nor face nor form;
 but we

That love, we know her more fair than
 anything."

—"Is she a queen, having great gifts to
 give?"

—"Yea, these: that whoso hath seen her
 shall not live

Except he serve her sorrowing, with
 strange pain,

Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer
 tears;

And when she bids die he shall surely die.
 And he shall leave all things under the sky,

And go forth naked under sun and rain,
 And work and wait and watch out all
 his years."

—"Hath she on earth no place of habita-
 tion?"

—"Age to age calling, nation answering
 nation,

Cries out, Where is she? and there is
 none to say;

For if she be not in the spirit of men,
 For if in the inward soul she hath no
 place,

In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face,
 In vain their mouths make much of her;

for they

Cry with vain tongues, till the heart
 lives again."

—"O ye that follow, and have ye no re-
 pentance?"

For on your brows is written a mortal
 sentence,

An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign,
 That in your lives ye shall not pause
 or rest,

Nor have the sure sweet common love,
 nor keep

Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor
 sleep."

—"These have we not, who have one
 thing, the divine

Face and clear eyes of faith and fruit-
 ful breast."

—"And ye shall die before your thrones be
 won."

—"Yea, and the changed world and the
 liberal sun

Shall move and shine without us, and
 we lie

Dead; but if she too move on earth,
 and live,

But if the old world with all the old irons
 rent

Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not
 content?

Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,
 Life being so little, and death so good
 to give."

—"And these men shall forget you."—

"Yea, but we

Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient
 sea,

And heaven-high air august, and awful
 fire,

And all things good; and no man's
 heart shall beat

But somewhat in it of our blood once shed
 Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the
 dead

Blood of men slain and the old same
 life's desire

Plants in their fiery footprints our
 fresh feet."

—"But ye that might be clothed with all
 things pleasant,

Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft
 present,

That clothe yourselves with the cold fu-
 ture air;

When mother and father and tender
 sister and brother

And the old live love that was shall be as
 ye,

Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be."

—"She shall be yet who is more than all
 these were,

Than sister or wife or father unto us
 or mother."

—"Is this worth life, is this, to win for
 wages?

Lo, the dead mouths of the awful gray-
 grown ages,

The venerable, in the past that is their
prison,
In the outer darkness, in the unopening
grave,
Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say
have said,
How many, and all are fallen, are fallen
and dead:
Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have
not risen?"
—"Not we but she, who is tender, and
swift to save."

—"Are ye not weary and faint not by the
way,
Seeing night by night devoured of day by
day,
Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleep-
less fire?
Sleepless; and ye too, when shall ye too
sleep?"
—"We are weary in heart and head, in
hands and feet,
And surely more than all things sleep were
sweet,—
Than all things save the inexorable desire
Which whoso knoweth shall neither
faint nor weep."

—"Is this so sweet that one were fain to
follow?
Is this so sure where all men's hopes are
hollow,
Even this your dream, that by much trib-
ulation
Ye shall make whole flawed hearts,
and bowed necks straight?"
—"Nay, though our life were blind, our
death were fruitless,
Not therefore were the whole world's high
hope rootless;
But man to man, nation would turn to
nation,
And the old life live, and the old great
word be great."

—"Pass on, then, and pass by us, and let
us be,
For what light think ye after life to see?
And if the world fare better will ye
know?
And if man triumph who shall seek
you and say?"
—"Enough of light is this for one life's
span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man;
And we men bring death lives by night
to sow,
That men may reap and eat and live
by day."

THE OBLATION

[1871.]

Ask nothing more of me, sweet;
All I can give you I give.
Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet:
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you sweet,
Think you and breathe you and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet:
He that hath more, let him give;
He that hath wings, let him soar;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

THE SONG OF THE STANDARD

[1871.]

MAIDEN most beautiful, mother most boun-
tiful, lady of lands,
Queen and republican, crowned of the cen-
turies whose years are thy sands,
See for thy sake what we bring to thee,
Italy, here in our hands.

This is the banner thy gonfalon, fair in
the front of thy fight,
Red from the hearts that were pierced for
thee, white as thy mountains are white,
Green as the spring of thy soul everlasting,
whose life-blood is light.

Take to thy bosom thy banner, a fair bird
fit for the nest,
Feathered for flight into sunrise or sunset,
for eastward or west,
Fledged for the flight everlasting, but held
yet warm to thy breast.

Gather it close to thee, song-bird or storm-
bearer, eagle or dove,
Lift it to sunward, a beacon beneath to
the beacon above,
Green as our hope in it, white as our
faith in it, red as our love.

Thunder and splendour of lightning are hid
in the folds of it furled;
Who shall unroll it but thou, as thy bolt to
be handled and hurled,
Out of whose lips is the honey, whose
bosom the milk of the world?

Out of thine hands hast thou fed us with
pasture of colour and song;
Glory and beauty by birthright to thee as
thy garments belong;
Out of thine hands thou shalt give us as
surely deliverance from wrong.

Out of thine eyes thou hast shed on us
love as a lamp in our night,
Wisdom a lodestar to ships, and remem-
brance a flame-coloured light;
Out of thine eyes thou shalt show us as
surely the sun-dawn of right.

Turn to us, speak to us, Italy, mother, but
once and a word,
None shall not follow thee, none shall not
serve thee, not one that has heard;
Twice hast thou spoken a message, and
time is athirst for the third.

Kingdom and empire of peoples thou
hadst, and thy lordship made one
North sea and south sea and east men
and west men that look on the sun;
Spirit was in thee and counsel, when soul
in the nations was none.

Banner and beacon thou wast to the cen-
turies of storm-wind and foam,
Ages that clashed in the dark with each
other, and years without home;
Empress and prophetess wast thou, and
what wilt thou now be, O Rome?

Ah, by the faith and the hope and the
love that have need of thee now,
Shines not thy face with the forethought
of freedom, and burns not thy brow?
Who is against her but all men? and who
is beside her but thou?

Art thou not better than all men? and
where shall she turn but to thee?
Lo, not a breath, not a beam, not a beacon
from midland to sea;
Freedom cries out for a sign among nations,
and none will be free.

England in doubt of her, France in despair
of her, all without heart—
Stand on her side in the onward of ages,
and strike on her part!
Strike but one stroke for the love of her
love of thee, sweet that thou art!

Take in thy right hand thy banner, a
strong staff fit for thine hand;
Forth at the light of it lifted shall foul
things flock from the land;
Faster than stars from the sun shall they
fly, being lighter than sand.

Green thing to green in the summer makes
answer, and rose-tree to rose;
Lily by lily the year becomes perfect; and
none of us knows
What thing is fairest of all things on earth
as it brightens and blows.

This thing is fairest in all time of all
things, in all time is best—
Freedom, that made thee, our mother, and
suckled her sons at thy breast;
Take to thy bosom the nations, and there
shall the world come to rest.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

[1878.]

In a coign of the cliff between lowland
and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between wind-
ward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland
island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless
bed

Where the weeds that grew green from the
graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and
broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone
land.

If a step should sound or a word be
spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange
guest's hand?

So long have the grey bare walks lain
guestless,

Through branches and briers if a man
make way,

He shall find no life but the sea-wind's,
restless

Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled,
That crawls by a track none turn to
climb

To the strait waste place that the years
have rifled

Of all but the thorns that are touched
not of time.

The thorns he spares when the rose is
taken;

The rocks are left when he wastes the
plain.

The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-
shaken,

These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot
that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-
plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the
nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to
reply.

Over the meadows that blossom and
wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless
breath.

Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as
death.

Here there was laughing of old, there was
weeping,

Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleep-
ing

Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood,
"Look thither,"

Did he whisper? "look forth from the
flowers to the sea;

For the foam-flowers endure when rose-
blossoms wither,

And men that love lightly may die—
but we?"

And the same wind sang and the same
waves whitened,

And or ever the garden's last petals
were shed,

In the lips that had whispered, the eyes
that had lightened,

Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then
went whither?

And were one to the end—but what
end who knows?

Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the
rose.

Shall the dead take thought for the dead
to love them?

What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above
them

Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields
and the sea.

Not a breath of the time that has been
hovers

In the air now soft with a summer to
be.

Not a breath shall there sweeten the sea-
sons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh
now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weep-
ing and laughter,
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever:
Here change may come not till all change
end.

From the graves they have made they shall
rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage
and rend.

Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild
ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these
shall be:

Till a last wind's breath upon all these
blowing

Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff
crumble,

Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs
drink,

Till the strength of the waves of the high
tides humble

The fields that lessen, the rocks that
shrink,

Here now in his triumph where all things
falter,

Stretched out on the spoils that his own
hand spread,

As a god self-slain on his own strange
altar,

Death lies dead.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

[1878.]

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's
is,

Under the roses I hid my heart.

Why would it sleep not? why should it
start,

When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and
part?

Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's
dart;

Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea
dozes,

And the wind is unquieter yet than thou
art.

Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's
wound smart?

Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?

What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,

It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,

It never was sold in the merchant's mart.

The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,

And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;

No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,

Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,

To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

AVE ATQUE VALE

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes

douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux

arbres
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs mar-

bres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.

Les Fleurs du Mal

[1878.]

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?

Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,

Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?

Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet

To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs

Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promon-
tories,

The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave

Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.

Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear

Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,

Blind gods that cannot spare.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,

Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,

Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;

The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;

And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep

Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;

And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,

Seeing as men sow men reap.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,

That were athirst for sleep and no more life

And no more love, for peace and no more strife!

Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping

Spirit and body and all the springs of song,

Is it well now where love can do no wrong,

Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang

Behind the unopening closure of her lips?

Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang

As dew from flower-bell drips?

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.

O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,

No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.

O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night

With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,

Sleep, and have sleep for light.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves
are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs
and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees
and feet

Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-
forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

Hast thou found any likeness for thy
vision?

O gardener of strange flowers, what bud,
what bloom,

Hast thou found sown, what gathered in
the gloom?

What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright
like blood?

Does the dim ground grow any seed of
ours,

The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are
mute

And all the stars keep silence? Are there
flowers

At all, or any fruit?

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more
fleet

Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of
the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's
veiled head,

Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of
dead sighs—

These only, these the hearkening spirit
hears,
Sees only such things rise.

Thou art far too far for wings of words
to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and
air?

What ails us gazing where ail seen is hol-
low?

Yet with some fancy, yet with some
desire,

Dreams pursue death as winds a flying
fire,

Our dreams pursue our dead and do not
find.

Still, and more swift than they, the thin
flame flies,

The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and
blind

Are still the eluded eyes.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's
changes,

Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad
soul,

The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut
scroll

I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that
throng

Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—

These I salute, these touch, these clasp
and fold

As though a hand were in my hand to
hold,

Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

I among these, I also, in such station

As when the pyre was charred, and piled
the sods,

And offering to the dead made, and their
gods,

The old mourners had, standing to make
libation,

I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise,
and shed

Offering to these unknown, the gods of
gloom,

And what of honey and spice my seed-
lands bear,

And what I may of fruits in this chilled
air,

And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the

King,

The flame that made of Troy a ruinous
thing,

Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could
quicken

There fall no tears like theirs that all
men hear

Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear

Down the opening leaves of holy poets'
pages.

Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns

The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not
 often
 Among us darkling here the lord of
 light
 Makes manifest his music and his might
 In hearts that open and in lips that soften
 With the soft flame and heat of songs
 that shine.
 Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter
 wine,
 And nourished them indeed with bitter
 bread;
 Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food
 came,
 The fire that scarred thy spirit at his
 flame
 Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he
 fed
 Who feeds our hearts with fame.
 Therefore he too now at thy soul's sun-
 setting,
 God of all suns and songs, he too bends
 down
 To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
 And save thy dust from blame and from
 forgetting.
 Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert
 and art,
 Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
 Mourns thee of many his children the last
 dead,
 And hallows with strange tears and alien
 sighs
 Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless
 eyes,
 And over thine irrevocable head
 Sheds light from the under skies.
 And one weeps with him in the ways
 Lethean,
 And stains with tears her changing bosom
 chill:
 That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
 That thing transformed which was the
 Cytherean,
 With lips that lost their Grecian laugh
 divine
 Long since, and face no more called Ery-
 cine
 A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
 Thee also with fair flesh and singing
 spell
 Did she, a sad and second prey, com-
 pel
 Into the footless places once more trod,
 And shadows hot from hell.
 And now no sacred staff shall break in
 blossom,
 No choral salutation lure to light
 A spirit sick with perfume and sweet
 night
 And love's tired eyes and hands and bar-
 ren bosom,

There is no help for these things; none
 to mend
 And none to mar; not all our songs, O
 friend,
 Will make death clear or make life durable.
 Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild
 vine
 And with wild notes about this dust of
 thine
 At least I fill the place where white dreams
 dwell
 And wreathe an unseen shrine.
 Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
 If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more
 to live;
 And to give thanks is good, and to for-
 give.
 Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
 Where all day through thine hands in
 barren braid
 Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and
 shade,
 Green buds of sorrow and sin, and rem-
 nants grey,
 Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, san-
 guine-hearted,
 Passions that sprang from sleep and
 thoughts that started,
 Shall death not bring us all as thee one
 day
 Among the days departed?

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
 Take at my hands this garland, and fare-
 well.
 Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry
 smell,
 And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
 With sadder than the Niobeian womb,
 And in the hollow of her breasts a
 tomb.
 Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are
 done;
 There lies not any troublous thing before,
 Nor sight nor sound to war against thee
 more,
 For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
 All waters as the shore.

• EVENING ON THE BROADS

[1880.]

Over two shadowless waters, adrift as a
 pinnace in peril,
 Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with
 irresolute light,
 Softly the soul of the sunset upholden
 awhile on the sterile
 Waves and wastes of the land, half re-
 possessed by the night.

Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and
 afar in the breathless
 Twilight: yonder the depths darken afar
 and asleep.
 Slowly the semblance of death out of hea-
 ven descends on the deathless
 Waters: hardly the light lives on the
 face of the deep—
 Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the
 grey soft shallow
 Hover the colours and clouds of the
 twilight, void of a star.
 As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged
 night, whose winglets are callow
 Yet, but soon with their plumes will she
 cover her brood from afar,
 Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber
 the skies with their blossom,
 Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed
 spring is encumbered with flowers.
 World upon world is enwound in the
 bountiful girth of her bosom,
 Warm and lustrous with life lovely to
 look on as ours,
 Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt
 that dissembles
 Still with itself, being sick of division
 and dimmed by dismay—
 Nay, not so; but with love and delight
 beyond passion it trembles,
 Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with
 love of the day:
 Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto
 death, and begotten
 Out of the womb of the tomb, born
 of the seed of the grave:
 Lovely with shadows of loves that are only
 not wholly forgotten,
 Only not wholly suppressed by the dark
 as a wreck by the wave.
 Still there linger the loves of the morning
 and noon, in a vision
 Blindly beheld, but in vain: ghosts that
 are tired, and would rest.
 But the glories beloved of the night rise all
 too dense for division,
 Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered
 as doves in a nest.
 Fainter the beams of the loves of the day-
 light season enkindled
 Wane, and the memories of hours that
 were fair with the love of them fade:
 Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset
 stricken and dwindled,
 Gather the signs of the love at the heart
 of the night new-made.
 New-made night, new-born of the sunset,
 immeasurable, endless.
 Opens the secret of love hid from of
 old in her heart,
 In the deep sweet heart full-charged with
 faultless love of the friendless

Spirits of men that are eased when the
 wheels of the sun depart.
 Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the
 waters upholden
 Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly
 for ever asway—
 Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile
 at the golden
 Limit of arching air fain for an hour
 to delay.
 Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep
 yet aslope to the gleaming
 Waste of the water without, waste of
 the water within,
 Lights overhead and lights underneath seem
 doubtfully dreaming
 Whether the day be done, whether the
 night may begin.
 Far and afar and farther again they falter
 and hover,
 Warm on the water and deep in the
 sky and pale on the cloud:
 Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to
 recover
 Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems,
 from the skirt of the shroud.
 Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause
 of the light in the westward
 Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of
 star upon star
 Hurried and eager of life as a child that
 strains to the breast-ward
 Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps
 where the ways of them are,
 Glad of the glory of the gift of their life
 and the wealth of its wonder,
 Fain of the night and the sea and the
 sweet wan face of the earth.
 Over them air grows deeper, intense with
 delight in them: under
 Things are thrilled in their sleep as with
 sense of a sure new birth.
 But here by the sand-bank watching, with
 eyes on the sea-line, stranger
 Grows to me also the weight of the sea-
 ridge gazed on of me,
 Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless,
 void though of danger,
 Void not of menace, but full of the might
 of the dense dull sea.
 Like as the wave is before me, behind is
 the bank deep-drifted;
 Yellow and thick as the bank is behind
 me, in front is the wave.
 As the wall of a prison imprisoning the
 mere is the girth of it lifted:
 But the rampire of water in front is
 erect as the wall of a grave.
 And the crests of it crumble and topple
 and change, but the wall is not broken:
 Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher
 than my head,

Moving inland alway again, reared up as
 in token
 Still of impending wrath still in the foam
 of it shed.
 And even in the pauses between them, di-
 viding the rollers in sunder,
 High overhead seems ever the sea-line
 fixed as a mark,
 And the shore where I stand as a valley
 beholden of hills whence thunder
 Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening
 the depths of the dark.
 Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, up-
 ward from under
 Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after
 it here from the shore:
 A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide
 sky's wonder
 Of colour and cloud, it climbs, or spreads
 as a slanted floor.
 And the large lights change on the face of
 the mere like things that were living,
 Winged and wonderful, 'beams like as
 birds are that pass and are free:
 But the light is dense as darkness, a gift
 withheld in the giving,
 That lies as dead on the fierce dull face
 of the landward sea.
 Stained and stifled and soiled, made earth-
 ier than earth is and duller,
 Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a
 thing put away:
 No transparent rapture, a molten music of
 colour;
 No translucent love taken and given of
 the day.
 Fettered and marred and begrimed is the
 light's live self on her falling,
 As the light of a man's life lighted the
 fume of a dungeon mars;
 Only she knows of the wind, when her
 wrath gives ear to him calling;
 The delight of the light she knows not,
 nor answers the sun or the stars.
 Love she hath none to return for the lu-
 minous love of their giving:
 None to reflect from the bitter and shal-
 low response of her heart.
 Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself
 seems dead and not living,
 Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with
 trouble that will not depart.
 In the sound of her speech to the darkness
 the moan of her evil remorse is,
 Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the
 dog-toothed sea-bank's fang
 And trampled to death by the rage of the
 feet of her foam-lipped horses
 Whose manes are yellow as plague, and
 as ensigns of pestilence hang,
 That wave in the foul faint air of the
 breath of a death-stricken city;

So menacing heaves she the manes of her
 rollers knotted with sand,
 Discoloured, opaque, suspended in sign as
 of strength without pity,
 That shake with flameless thunder the
 low long length of the strand.
 Here, far off in the farther extreme of the
 shore as it lengthens
 Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a
 village begin,
 On the lapsing land that recedes as the
 growth of the strong sea strengthens
 Shoreward, thrusting further and further
 its outworks in,
 Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of
 her kin forsaken,
 Lay in her golden raiment alone on the
 wild wave's edge,
 Surely by no shore else, but here on the
 bank storm-shaken,
 Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of
 the sun on the sedge.
 Here on a shore unbeheld of his eyes in
 a dream he beheld her
 Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a
 far-off king:
 And over the babe-flower gently the head
 of a pastoral elder
 Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the haw-
 thorn-blossom in spring,
 And kind as harvest in autumn: a shelter
 of shade on the lonely
 Shelterless unknown shore scourged of
 implacable waves:
 Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in
 his kingdom, and only
 Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph
 that conquers and craves.
 All these waters and wastes are his empire
 of old, and awaken
 From barren and stagnant slumber at only
 the sound of his breath:
 Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in
 his heart, nor the goal overtaken
 That his wide wings yearn for and labour
 as hearts that yearn after death.
 All the solitude sighs and expects with a
 blind expectation
 Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart,
 grown heartsick of strife:
 Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and
 moans, and the vast ululation
 Takes wing with the clouds on the
 waters, and wails to be quit of its life.
 For the spirit and soul of the waste is the
 wind, and his wings with their waving
 Darken and lighten the darkness and
 light of it thickened or thinned;
 But the heart that impels them is even as
 a conqueror's insatiably craving
 That victory can fill not, as power can-
 not satiate the want of the wind.

All these moorlands and marshes are full
of his might, and oppose not
Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest
or precipice piled:

But the will of the wind works ever as
his that desires what he knows not,
And the wail of his want unfulfilled is
as one making moan for her child.

And the cry of his triumph is even as the
crying of hunger that maddens

The heart of a strong man aching in vain
as the wind's heart aches;

And the sadness itself of the land for its
infinite solitude saddens

More for the sound than the silence
athirst for the sound that slakes.

And the sunset at last and the twilight are
dead: and the darkness is breathless
With fear of the wind's breath rising that
seems and seems not to sleep:

But a sense of the sound of it alway, a
spirit unsleeping and deathless,
Ghost or God, evermore moves on the
face of the deep.

HOPE AND FEAR

[1882.]

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own
sphere,

Hope from the front of youth in godlike
cheer

Looks Godward, past the shades where
blind men grope

Round the dark door that prayers nor
dreams can open,

And makes for joy the very darkness
dear

That gives her wide wings play; nor
dreams that fear

At noon may rise and pierce the soul of
hope.

Then, when the soul leaves off to dream
and yearn,

May truth first purge her eyesight to dis-
cern

What once being known leaves time no
power to appal;

Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not,
learn

The kind wise word that falls from years
that fall—

"Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at
all."

FROM THE PRELUDE TO TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

[1882.]

Love, that is first and last of all things
made,
The light that has the living world for
shade,

The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison,
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and
thought,

And always through new act and passion
new

Shines the divine same body and beauty
through,

The body spiritual of fire and light

That is to worldly noon as noon to light;
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man

And spirit within the flesh whence breath
began;

Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in
chime;

Love, that is blood within the veins of
time;

That wrought the whole world without
stroke of hand,

Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of
land,

And with the pulse and motion of his
breath

Through the great heart of the earth strikes
life and death,

The sweet twain chords that make the
sweet tune live

Through day and night of things alterna-
tive,

Through silence and through sound of
stress and strife,

And ebb and flow of dying death and
life;

Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's
ears,

Whence all men's eyes take fire from
sparks of tears,

That binds on all men's feet or chains or
wings;

Love, that is root and fruit of terrene
things;

Love, that the whole world's waters shall
not drown,

The whole world's fiery forces not burn
down;

Love, that what time his own hands guard
his head

The whole world's wrath and strength shall
not strike dead;

Love, that if once his own hands make
his grave

The whole world's pity and sorrow shall
not save;

Love, that for very life shall not be sold,
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with
gold;

So strong that heaven, could love bid hea-
ven farewell,

Would turn to fruitless and unflowering
hell;

So sweet that hell, to hell could love be
 given,
 Would turn to splendid and sonorous hea-
 ven;
 Love that is fire within thee and light
 above,
 And lives by grace of nothing but of love;
 Through many and lovely thoughts and
 much desire
 Led these twain to the life of tears and
 fire;
 Through many and lovely days and much
 delight
 Led these twain to the lifeless life of
 night.

THE WAY OF THE WIND

[1883.]

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow
 None may measure, as none can say
 How the heart in her shows the swallow
 The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay
 Waves that whiten on wrecks that wallow,
 Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow
 Thought and hope and the red last ray,
 Swim the waters of years that follow
 The wind's way.

A BABY'S DEATH

[1883.]

I

A LITTLE soul scarce fledged for earth
 Takes wing with heaven again for goal
 Even while we hailed as fresh from birth
 A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,
 Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth
 What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,
 And all things held in time's control
 Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not
 worth

A little soul.

II

The little feet that never trod
 Earth, never strayed in field or street,
 What hand leads upward back to God
 The little feet?

A rose in June's most honied heat,
 When life makes keen the kindling sod,
 Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period
 A few swift moons have seen complete
 Since mother's hands first clasped and shod
 The little feet.

III

The little hands that never sought
 Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,
 What gift has death, God's servant, brought
 The little hands?

We ask: but love's self silent stands,
 Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought
 To search where death's dim heaven ex-
 pands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know
 nought,
 Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,
 Where hands of guiding angels caught
 The little hands.

IV

The little eyes that never knew
 Light other than of dawning skies,
 What new life now lights up anew
 The little eyes?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise
 Such light as never heaven let through
 To lighten earth from Paradise?

No storm, we know, may change the blue
 Soft heaven that haply death describes;
 No tears, like these in ours, bedew
 The little eyes.

V

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,
 So strait the wide world's range,
 He would not stay to wonder why
 Was life so strange?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange
 Beside that house on high
 Whence Time that bore him failed to
 estrange?

That here at once his soul put by
 All gifts of time and change,
 And left us heavier hearts to sigh
 "Was life so strange?"

VI

Angel by name love called him, seeing so
 fair

The sweet small frame;
 Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,
 Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own
 heart he came,
 And might not bear
 The cloud that covers earth's wan face
 with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare
 And soft a flame:
 Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed
 him there
 Angel by name.

VII

The song that smiled upon his birthday here
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless
tear

The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever
styled
Sovereign of arts, and angel: fate and fear
Knew then their master, and were recon-
ciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer
sphere
Michael, an angel and a little child,
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his
bier

The song that smiled.

THE CLIFFSIDE PATH

[A Midsummer Holiday, No. VI]

[1884.]

SEAWARD goes the sun, and homeward by
the down
We, before the night upon his grave be
sealed.

Low behind us lies the bright steep mur-
muring town,
High before us heaves the steep rough
silent field.

Breach by ghastlier breach, the cliffs col-
lapsing yield:
Half the path is broken, half the banks
divide;

Flawed and crumbled, riven and rent, they
cleave and slide

Toward the ridged and wrinkled waste of
girdling sand

Deep beneath, whose furrows tell how far
and wide

Wind is lord and change is sovereign of
the strand.

Star by star on the unsunned waters twir-
ling down,

Golden spear-points glance against a silver
shield.

Over banks and bents, across the headland's
crown,

As by pulse of gradual plumes through
twilight wheeled,

Soft as sleep, the waking wind awakes the
weald.

Moor and copse and fallow, near or far
descried,

Feel the mild wings move, and gladden
where they glide:

Silence uttering love that all things under-
stand,

Bids the quiet fields forget that hard beside
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of
the strand

Yet may sight, ere all the hoar soft shade
grow brown,

Hardly reckon half the rifts and rents un-
healed

Where the scarred cliffs downward sun-
dering drive and drown,

Hewn as if with stroke of swords in tem-
pest steeled,

Wielded as the night's will and the wind's
may wield.

Crowned and zoned in vain with flowers of
autumn-tide,

Life and love seek harborage on the land-
ward side;

Wind is lord and change is sovereign of
the strand.

Friend, though man be less than these, for
all his pride,

Yet, for all his weakness, shall not hope
abide?

Wind and change can wreck but life and
waste but land:

Truth and trust are sure, though here till
all subside

Wind is lord and change is sovereign of
the strand.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

November 4, 1889

Somno mollior und

[1894.]

I

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,
Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.

Love's own self was the deep sea's daugh-
ter,

Fair and flawless from face to feet,
Hailed of all when the world was golden,

Loved of lovers whose names beholden
Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden

Days more glad than their flight was
fleet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,
Souls that hear not her word in vain,

Earth beside her and heaven above her
Seem but shadows that wax and wane.

Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,

Blither than spring's when her flowerful
tresses

Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish
Swell beneath me and laughs and sighs,

Sighs for love of the life they cherish,
Laughs to know that it lives and dies,

Dies for joy of its life, and lives
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—

Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives—
Change that bids it subside and rise.

II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,
 Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,
 Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering
 Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.
 Dawn and even and noon are one,
 Veiled with vapour and void of sun:
 Nought in sight or in fancied hearing
 Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas
 glimmer,

Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,
 As a dream's where darkness and light
 seem dimmer,

Touched by dawn or subdued by night.
 The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,
 Swings the rollers to westward, clad
 With lustrous shadow that lures the swim-
 mer,

Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,
 Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,
 Fill the world of the skies whereunder
 Heaves and quivers and pants aloud
 All the world of the waters, hoary
 Now, but clothed with its own live glory,
 That mates the lightning and mocks the
 thunder

With light more living and word more
 proud.

III

Far off westward, whither sets the sound-
 ing strife,

Strife more sweet than peace, of shore-
 less waves whose glee

Scorns the shore and loves the wind that
 leaves them free,

Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair
 as life,

Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine
 on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters
 crowd,

Fast as autumn days toward winter: yet
 it seems

Here that autumn wanes not, here that
 woods and streams

Lose not heart and change not likeness,
 chilled and bowed,

Warped and wrinkled: here the days are
 fair as dreams.

IV

O russet-robed November,
 What ails thee so to smile?

Chill August, pale September,
 Endured a woful while,

And fell as falls an ember
 From forth a flameless pile;

But golden-girt November
 Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning
 As wanes the morning moon,
 Here falling, here refraining,
 Outbraves the pride of June
 With statelier semblance, feigning
 No fear lest death be soon:
 As though the woods thus waning
 Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken
 By grey December's breath,
 These lordlier growths that sicken
 And die for fear of death
 Should feel the sense requicken
 That hears what springtide saith
 And thrills for love, spring-stricken
 And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter
 That stings and spurs thy sea
 Doth yet but feed and feast her
 With glowing sense of glee:
 Calm chained her, storm released her,
 And storm's glad voice was he:
 South-wester or north-easter,
 Thy winds rejoice the sea.

V

A dream, a dream is it all — the season,
 The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?
 A day-born dream of divine unreason,
 A marvel moulded of sleep — no more?
 For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while
 cleaving
 Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving
 Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving
 Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
 A peace more happy than lives on land,
 Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure
 The dreaming head and the steering hand.
 I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,
 The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
 And close mine eyes for delight past meas-
 ure,
 And wish the wheel of the world would
 stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would
 capture
 Falls as from heaven that its light feet
 clomb,
 So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture
 Was felt that soothed me with sense of
 home.
 To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—
 Such joy the vision of man saw never;
 For here too soon will a dark day sever
 The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's
 foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and
 dimmer
 At once and brighter than dreams that
 flee,
 The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer
 Abides, remembered as truth may be.
 Not all the joy and not all the glory
 Must fade as leaves when the woods wax
 hoary:
 For there the downs and the sea-banks
 glimmer,
 And here to south of them swells the sea.

ENGLAND: AN ODE

[1894.]

I

SEA and strand, and a lordlier land than
 sea-tides rolling and rising sun
 Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten
 with day when day that was here is
 done,
 Call aloud on their children, proud with
 trust that future and past are one.
 Far and near from the swan's nest here
 the stormbirds bred of her fair white
 breast,
 Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam,
 have borne the fame of her east and
 west;
 North and south has the storm-wind's
 mouth rung praise of England and
 England's quest.
 Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore
 to fly with an equal wing:
 France and Spain with their warrior train
 bowed down before her as thrall to
 king;
 India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway
 more fruitful of life than spring.
 Darkness round them as iron bound fell off
 from races of elder name,
 Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids
 freedom lighten and burn as flame;
 Night endures not the touch that cures of
 kingship tyrants, and slaves of shame.
 All the terror of time, where error and
 fear were lords of a world of slaves,
 Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish
 darkening as waves on waves,
 Fell or fled from a face that shed such
 grace as quickens the dust of graves.
 Things of night at her glance took flight:
 the strengths of darkness recoiled and
 sank:
 Sank the fires of the murderous pyres
 whereon wild agony writhed and
 shrank:
 Rose the light of the reign of right from
 gulfs of years that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight,
 whence glory lightens and music rings,
 Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite
 and still the discord of evil things,
 Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but
 darkened now by her sail-stretched
 wings.

II

Music made of change and conquest, glory
 born of evil slain,
 Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade
 the lights of tempest wane,
 Where the deathless dawn of England rose
 in sign that right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and
 blind with blood and lust,
 Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed,
 and slaves allowed it just,
 Rose as England's light on Asia rose, an
 smote them down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by jus-
 tice with her sword,
 Smote and saved and raised and ruined,
 till the tyrant-ridden horde
 Saw the lightning fade from heaven and
 knew the sun for God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England,
 where the smile of England shines,
 Rings the tread and laughs the face of free-
 dom, fair as hope divines
 Days to be, more brave than ours and lit
 by lordlier stars for signs.

All our past acclaims our future: Shakes-
 peare's voice and Nelson's hand,
 Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in
 this our chosen and chainless land,
 Bear us witness: come the world against
 her, England yet shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he
 lied who said it; he

Whom the winds that ward her, waves that
 clasp, and herb and flower and tree
 Fed with English dew and sunbeams, hail
 as more than man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our
 England be but true,
 Keep but faith with England fast and firm,
 and none should bid her rue;
 None may speak as he: but all may know
 the sign that Shakespeare knew.

III

From the springs of the dawn, from the
 depths of the noon, from the heights
 of the night that shine,
 Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that
 found but in England her throne and
 her shrine,
 Speak louder than song may proclaim them,
 that here is the seal of them set for a
 sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders ap-
plause of the land that is one with the
sea

Speaks Time in the ear of the people that
never at heart was not inly free
The word of command that assures us of
life, if we will but that life shall be;

If the race that is first of the races of men
who behold unashamed the sun
Stand fast and forget not the sign that is
given of the years and the wars that
are done,

The token that all who are born of its
blood should in heart as in blood be
one.

The word of remembrance that lightens as
fire from the steepes of the storm-lit
past

Bids only the faith of our fathers endure
in us, firm as they held it fast;

That the glory which was from the first
upon England alone may endure to the
last.

That the love and the hate may change not,
the faith may not fade, nor the wrath
nor scorn,

That shines for her sons and that burns for
her foemen as fire of the night or the
morn:

That the births of her womb may forget
not the sign of the glory wherein they
were born.

A light that is more than the sunlight, an
air that is brighter than morning's
breath,

Clothes England about as the strong sea
clasps her, and answers the word that
it saith;

The word that assures her of life if she
change not, and choose not the ways of
death.

Change darkens and lightens around her,
alternate in hope and in fear to be:

Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor
fear whether hope be not blind as she:

But the sun is in heaven that beholds her
immortal, and girdled with life by the
sea.

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

[1894.]

HE held no dream worth waking: so he
said,

He who stands now on death's triumphal
steep,

Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
And dream of what he knows and sees,
being dead.

But never death for him was dark or dread:
"Look forth," he bade the soul, and fear
not. Weep,

All ye that trust not in his truth, and
keep

Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
As all that lives of all that once was he
Save that which lightens from his word:
but we,

Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters
roll,

Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,
Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit
is whole,

And life and death but shadows of the
soul.

DECEMBER 13-15, 1889.

HUMOROUS VERSE

THE AGE OF WISDOM

Ho! PRETTY page, with the dimpled chin,
That never has known the barber's shear,
All your wish is woman to win;
This is the way that boys begin,—
Wait till you come to forty year.

Curly gold locks cover foolish brains,
Billing and cooing is all your cheer;
Sighing and singing of midnight strains
Under Bonnybell's window-panes,—
Wait till you come to forty year!

Forty times over let Michaelmas pass,
Grizzling hair the brain doth clear;
Then you know a boy is an ass,
Then you know the worth of a lass,
—Once you have come to forty year.

Pledge me round; I bid ye declare,
All good fellows whose beards are grey,
Did not the fairest of the fair
Common grow and wearisome, ere
Ever a month was pass'd away?

The reddest lips that ever have kiss'd,
The brightest eyes that ever have shone,
May pray and whisper and we not list,
Or look away and never be miss'd,
Ere yet ever a month is gone.

Gillian's dead, God rest her bier,—
How I loved her twenty years syne!
But first with beef and captain's biscuits
Alive and merry at forty year,
Dipping my nose in the Gascon wine.
1850. — W. M. THACKERAY.

LITTLE BILLEE

AIR—"Il y avait un petit navire."

THERE were three sailors of Bristol city
Who took a boat and went to sea.
But first with beef and captain's biscuits
And pickled pork they loaded she.

There was gorging Jack and guzzling
Jimmy,
And the youngest he was little Billee.
Now when they got as far as the Equator
They'd nothing left but one split pea.

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy
"I am extremely hungaree."
To gorging Jack says guzzling Jimmy,
"We've nothing left, us must eat we."

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy,
"With one another we should n't agree!
There's little Bill, he's young and tender,
We're old and tough, so let's eat he.

"Oh! Billy, we're going to kill and eat
you,
So undo the button of your chemie."
When Bill received this information
He used his pocket handkerchie.

"First let me say my catechism,
Which my poor mammy taught to me."
"Make haste, make haste," says guzzling
Jimmy,
While Jack pulled out his snickersnee.

So Billy went up to the main-top gallant
mast,
And down he fell on his bended knee.
He scarce had come to the twelfth com-
mandment
When up he jumps. "There's land I see:

"Jerusalem and Madagascar,
And North and South Amerikee:
There's the British flag a-riding at anchor,
With Admiral Napier, K. C. B."

So when they got aboard of the Admiral's
He hanged fat Jack and flogged Jimmee;
But as for little Bill he made him
The Captain of a Seventy-three.
1849. — W. M. THACKERAY.

THE BALLAD OF BOUILLABAISSE

A STREET there is in Paris famous,
For which no rhyme our language yield;
Rue Neuve des Petits Champs its name is—
The New Street of the Little Fields.
And here's an inn, not rich and splendid,
But still in comfortable case;
The which in youth I oft attended,
To eat a bowl of Bouillabaisse.

This Bouillabaisse a noble dish is—
A sort of soup or broth, or brew,
Or hotchpotch of all sorts of fishes,
That Greenwich never could outdo:
Green herbs, red peppers, mussels, saffron,
Soles, onions, garlic, roach, and dace:
All these you eat at Terré's tavern,
In that one dish of Bouillabaisse.

Indeed, a rich and savory stew 'tis;
 And true philosophers, methinks,
 Who love all sorts of natural beauties,
 Should love good victuals and good
 drinks.
 And Cordelier or Benedictine
 Might gladly, sure, his lot embrace,
 Nor find a fast-day too afflicting,
 Which served him up a Bouillabaisse.

I wonder if the house still there is?
 Yes, here the lamp is, as before;
 The smiling red-cheeked écaillère is
 Still opening oysters at the door.
 Is Terré still alive and able?
 I recollect his droll grimace;
 He'd come and smile before your table,
 And hope you liked your Bouillabaisse.

We enter — nothing's changed or older.
 "How's Monsieur Terré, waiter, pray?"
 The waiter stares and shrugs his shoulder —
 "Monsieur is dead this many a day."
 "It is the lot of saint and sinner,
 So honest Terré's run his race!"
 "What will Monsieur require for dinner?"
 "Say, do you still cook Bouillabaisse?"

"Oh, oui, Monsieur," 's the waiter's answer;
 "Quel vin Monsieur désire-t-il?"
 "Tell me a good one." — "That I can, Sir:
 The Chambertin with yellow seal."
 "So Terré's gone," I say, and sink in
 My old accustom'd corner-place;
 "He's done with feasting and with drink-
 ing,
 With Burgundy and Bouillabaisse."

My old accustom'd corner here is, —
 The table still is in the nook;
 Ah! vanish'd many a busy year is
 This well-known chair since last I took.
 When first I saw ye, *cari luoghi*,
 I'd scarce a beard upon my face,
 And now a grizzled, grim old fogey,
 I sit and wait for Bouillabaisse.

Where are you, old companions trusty
 Of early days here met to dine?
 Come, waiter! quick, a flagon crusty —
 I'll pledge them in the good old wine.
 The kind old voices and old faces
 My memory can quick retrace;
 Around the board they take their places,
 And share the wine and Bouillabaisse.

There's Jack has made a wondrous mar-
 riage:
 There's laughing Tom is laughing yet;
 There's brave Augustus drives his carriage;
 There's poor old Fred in the *Gazette*;
 On James's head the grass is growing:
 Good Lord! the world has wagged apace
 Since here we set the Claret flowing,
 And drank, and ate the Bouillabaisse.

Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!
 I mind me of a time that's gone,
 When here I'd sit, as now I'm sitting,
 In this same place — but not alone.
 A fair young form was nestled near me,
 A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
 And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me.
 — There's no one now to share my cup.

I drink it as the Fates ordain it.
 Come, fill it, and have done with rhymes:
 Fill up the lonely glass, and drain it
 In memory of dear old times.
 Welcome the wine, whate'er the seal is;
 And sit you down and say your grace
 With thankful heart, whate'er the meal is.
 — Here comes the smoking Bouillabaisse!
 1849. — W. M. THACKERAY.

SORROWS OF WERTHER

WERTHER had a love for Charlotte
 Such as words could never utter;
 Would you know how first he met her?
 She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,
 And a moral man was Werther,
 And, for all the wealth of Indies,
 Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,
 And his passion boiled and bubbled,
 Till he blew his silly brains out,
 And no more was by it troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
 Borne before her on a shutter,
 Like a well-conducted person,
 Went on cutting bread and butter.
 1855. — W. M. THACKERAY.

THE JUMBLIES

THEY went to sea in a sieve, they did;
 In a sieve they went to sea;
 In spite of all their friends could say,
 On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
 In a sieve they went to sea.
 And when the sieve turn'd round and round,
 And every one cried, "You'll be drown'd!"
 They call'd aloud, "Our sieve ain't big:
 But we don't care a button; we don't care
 a fig:

In a sieve we 'll go to sea!"
 Far and few, far and few,
 Are the lands where the Jumbles live;
 Their heads are green, and their hands
 are blue;
 And they went to sea in a sieve.

They sail'd away in a sieve, they did,
 In a sieve they sail'd so fast,
 With only a beautiful pea-green veil
 Tied with a ribbon, by way of a sail,
 To a small tobacco-pipe mast.

And every one said who saw them go,
 "Oh! won't they be soon upset, you know:
 For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long;
 And, happen what may, it 's extremely
 wrong
 In a sieve to sail so fast."

The water it soon came in, it did;
 The water it soon came in:
 So, to keep them dry, they wrapp'd their
 feet
 In a pinky paper all folded neat:
 And they fasten'd it down with a pin.
 And they pass'd the night in a crockery-
 jar;
 And each of them said, "How wise we are!
 Though the sky be dark, and the voyage
 be long,
 Yet we never can think we were rash or
 wrong,
 While round in our sieve we spin."

And all night long they sail'd away;
 And, when the sun went down,
 They whistled and warbled a moony song
 To the echoing sound of a coppersy gong,
 In the shade of the mountains brown,
 "O Timballoo! how happy we are
 When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar!
 And all night long, in the moonlight pale,
 We sail away with a pea-green sail
 In the shade of the mountains brown."
 They sail'd to the Western Sea, they did,—
 To a land all cover'd with trees:
 And they bought an owl, and a useful cart,
 And a pound of rice, and a cranberry-tart,
 And a hive of silvery bees;
 And they bought a pig, and some green
 jackdaws,
 And a lovely monkey with lollipop paws,
 And forty bottles of ring-bo-ree,
 And no end of Stilton cheese:

And in twenty years they all came back,—
 In twenty years or more;
 And every one said, "How tall they've
 grown!
 For they've been to the Lakes, and the Tor-
 rible Zone,
 And the hills of the Chankly Bore."
 And they drank their health, and gave
 them a feast
 Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
 And every one said, "If we only live,
 We, too, will go to sea in a sieve,
 To the hills of the Chankly Bore."
 Far and few, far and few,
 Are the lands where the Jumbles live:
 Their heads are green, and their hands
 are blue;
 And they went to sea in a sieve.

1871.

— EDWARD LEAR.

THE MOCK TURTLE'S SONG

[From Alice in Wonderland.]

"WILL you walk a little faster?" said a
 whiting to a snail,
 "There 's a porpoise close behind us, and
 he 's treading on my tail.
 See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles
 all advance!
 They are waiting on the shingle—will
 you come and join the dance?
 Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,
 will you join the dance?
 Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,
 wo'n't you join the dance?"

"You can really have no notion how de-
 lightful it will be
 When they take us up and throw us, with
 the lobsters, out to sea!"
 But the snail replied "Too far, too far!",
 and gave a look askance—
 Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he
 would not join the dance.
 Would not, could not, would not, could
 not, would not join the dance.
 Would not, could not, would not, could
 not, could not join the dance.

"What matters it how far we go?" his
 scaly friend replied.
 "There is another shore, you know, upon
 the other side.
 The further off from England the nearer is
 to France—
 Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but
 come and join the dance.
 Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,
 will you join the dance?
 Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,
 wo'n't you join the dance?"
 1865. — LEWIS CARROLL.

THE WALRUS AND THE CARPENTER

[From Through the Looking Glass.]

THE sun was shining on the sea,
 Shining with all his might:
 He did his very best to make
 The billows smooth and bright—
 And this was odd, because it was
 The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
 Because she thought the sun
 Had got no business to be there
 After the day was done—
 "It's very rude of him," she said,
 "To come and spoil the fun!"

The sea was wet as wet could be,
The sands were dry as dry.
You could not see a cloud, because
No cloud was in the sky:
No birds were flying overhead —
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand:
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
"If this were only cleared away,"
They said, "it *would* be grand!"

"If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
"That they could get it clear?"
"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"
The Walrus did beseech.
"A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
Along the briny beach:
We cannot do with more than four,
To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,
But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
And shook his heavy head —
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,
All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces
washed,
Their shoes were clean and neat —
And this was odd, because, you know,
They had n't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four;
And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more —
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax —
Of cabbages — and kings —
And why the sea is boiling hot —
And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,
"Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out of breath,
And all of us are fat!"
"No hurry!" said the Carpenter.
They thanked him much for that.

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,
"Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed —
Now, if you 're ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
"After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!"
"The night is fine," the Walrus said,
"Do you admire the view?"

"It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"Cut us another slice.
I wish you were not quite so deaf —
I've had to ask you twice!"

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,
"To play them such a trick.
After we've brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"The butter's spread too thick!"

"I weep for you," the Walrus said:
"I deeply sympathize."
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

"O Oysters," said the Carpenter,
"You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?"
But answer came there none —
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one.

1872.

— LEWIS CARROLL.

JABBERWOCKY

[From Through the Looking Glass.]

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his, vorpal sword in hand:
 Long time the manxome foe he sought—
 So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
 And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
 The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
 Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,
 And burred as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and
 through
 The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
 He left it dead, and with its head
 He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
 Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
 O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
 He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
 All mimsy were the borogoves,
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

1872.

—LEWIS CARROLL.

THE BAKER'S TALE

[From the Hunting of the Snark.]

They rous'd him with muffins—they rous'd
 him with ice—

They rous'd him with mustard and
 cress—

They rous'd him with jam and judicious
 advice—

They set him conundrums to guess.

When at length he sat up and was able to
 speak,

His sad story he offer'd to tell;
 And the Bellman cried "Silence! Not even
 a shriek!"

And excitedly tingled his bell.

There was silence supreme! Not a shriek,
 not a scream,

Scarcely even a howl or a groan,
 As the man they call'd "Ho!" told his
 story of woe

In an antediluvian tone.

"My father and mother were honest,
 though poor—"

"Skip all that!" cried the Bellman in
 haste.

"If it once becomes dark, there's no chance
 of a Snark—

We have hardly a minute to waste!"

"I skip forty years," said the Baker, in
 tears,

"And proceed without further remark
 To the day when you took me aboard of
 your ship
 To help you in hunting the Snark.

"A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was
 nam'd)

Remark'd, when I bade him farewell—"

"Oh, skip your dear uncle!" the Bellman
 exclaim'd,

As he angrily tingled his bell.

"He remark'd to me then," said the mildest
 of men,

"If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:
 Fetch it home by all means—you may
 serve it with greens,

And it's handy for striking a light.

"You may seek it with thimbles—and
 seek it with care;

You may hunt it with forks and hope;

You may threaten its life with a railway-
 share;

You may charm it with smiles and
 soap—"

("That's exactly the method," the Bellman
 bold

In a hasty parenthesis cried,

"That's exactly the way I have always
 been told

That the capture of Snarks should be
 tried!")

"But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the
 day,

If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
 You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
 And never be met with again!"

"It is this, it is this that oppresses my
 soul,

When I think of my uncle's last words:
 And my heart is like nothing so much
 as a bowl

Brimming over with quivering curds!

"It is this, it is this—" "We have had that
 before!"

The Bellman indignantly said.

And the Baker replied, "Let me say it once
 more.

It is this, it is this that I dread!

"I engage with the Snark—every night
 after dark—

In a dreamy, delirious fight;

I serve it with greens in those shadowy
 scenes,

And I use it for striking a light:

"But if ever I meet with a Boojum, that
 day,

In a moment (of this I am sure),

I shall softly and suddenly vanish away—
 And the notion I cannot endure!"

1876.

—LEWIS CARROLL.

CAPTAIN REECE

OF ALL the ships upon the blue,
No ship contained a better crew
Than that of worthy CAPTAIN REECE,
Commanding of *The Mantelpiece*.

He was adored by all his men,
For worthy CAPTAIN REECE, R. N.,
Did all that lay within him to
Promote the comfort of his crew.

If ever they were dull or sad,
Their captain danced to them like mad,
Or told, to make the time pass by,
Droll legends of his infancy.

A feather bed had every man,
Warm slippers and hot-water can,
Brown windsor from the captain's store,
A valet, too, to every four.

Did they with thirst in summer burn?
Lo, seltzogenes at every turn,
And on all very sultry days
Cream ices handed round on trays.

Then currant wine and ginger pops
Stood handily on all the "tops:"
And, also, with amusement rife,
A "Zoetrope, or Wheel of Life."

New volumes came across the sea
From MISTER MUDIE's librarée;
The Times and Saturday Review
Beguiled the leisure of the crew.

Kind-hearted CAPTAIN REECE, R. N.,
Was quite devoted to his men;
In point of fact, good CAPTAIN REECE
Beatified *The Mantelpiece*.

One summer eve, at half-past ten,
He said (addressing all his men):
"Come, tell me, please, what I can do
To please and gratify my crew.

"By any reasonable plan
I'll make you happy if I can;
My own convenience count as *nil*;
It is my duty, and I will."

Then up and answered WILLIAM LEE,
(The kindly captain's coxswain he,
A nervous, shy, low-spoken man)
He cleared his throat and thus began:

"You have a daughter, CAPTAIN REECE,
Ten female cousins and a niece,
A ma, if what I'm told is true,
Six sisters, and an aunt or two.

"Now, somehow, sir, it seems to me,
More friendly-like we all should be,
If you united of 'em to
Unmarried members of the crew.

"If you'd ameliorate our life,
Let each select from them a wife;
And as for nervous me, old pal,
Give me your own enchanting gal!"

Good CAPTAIN REECE, that worthy man,
Debated on his coxswain's plan:
"I quite agree," he said, "O BILL,
It is my duty, and I will.

"My daughter, that enchanting gurl,
Has just been promised to an earl,
And all my other familee
To peers of various degree.

"But what are dukes and viscounts to
The happiness of all my crew?
The word I gave you I'll fulfil;
It is my duty, and I will.

"As you desire it shall befall,
I'll settle thousands on you all,
And I shall be, despite my hoard,
The only bachelor on board."

The boatswain of *The Mantelpiece*,
He blushed and spoke to CAPTAIN REECE:
"I beg your honor's leave," he said,
"If you would wish to go and wed,

"I have a widowed mother who
Would be the very thing for you—
She long has loved you from afar,
She washes for you, CAPTAIN R."

The captain saw the dame that day—
Addressed her in his playful way—
"And did it want a wedding ring?
It was a tempting ickle sing!

"Well, well, the chaplain I will seek,
We'll all be married this day week—
At yonder church upon the hill;
It is my duty, and I will!"

The sisters, cousins, aunts, and niece,
And widowed ma of CAPTAIN REECE,
Attended there as they were bid;
It was their duty, and they did.

1869.

— W. S. GILBERT.

THE BISHOP OF RUM-TI-FOO

FROM east and south the holy clan
Of bishops gathered, to a man;
To Synod, called Pan-Anglican;
In flocking crowds they came.

Among them was a Bishop, who
Had lately been appointed to
The balmy isle of Rum-ti-foo,
And Peter was his name.

His people—twenty-three in sum—
They played the eloquent tum-tum
And lived on scalps served up in rum—
The only sauce they knew.

When first good BISHOP PETER came
(For PETER was that Bishop's name),
To humor them, he did the same
As they of Rum-ti-Foo.

His flock, I've often heard him tell,
(His name was PETER) loved him well,
And summoned by the sound of bell,
In crowds together came.
"Oh, massa, why you go away?
Oh, MASSA PETER, please to stay."
(They called him PETER, people say,
Because it was his name.)

He told them all good boys to be,
And sailed away across the sea,
At London Bridge that Bishop he
Arrived one Tuesday night—
And as that night he homeward strode
To his Pan-Anglican abode
He passed along the Borough Road
And saw a gruesome sight.

He saw a crowd assembled round
A person dancing on the ground,
Who straight began to leap and bound
With all his might and main.
To see that dancing man he stopped,
Who twirled and wriggled, skipped and
hopped,
Then down incontinently dropped,
And then sprang up again.

The Bishop chuckled at the sight,
"This style of dancing would delight
A simple Rum-ti-Foozle-ite.
I'll learn it, if I can,
To please the tribe when I get back."
He begged the man to teach his knack.
"Right Reverend Sir, in half a crack,"
Replied that dancing man.

The dancing man he worked away
And taught the Bishop every day—
The dancer skipped like any fay—
Good PETER did the same.
The Bishop buckled to his task
With *battements*, cuts, and *pas de basque*,
(I'll tell you, if you care to ask,
That PETER was his name).

"Come, walk like this," the dancer said,
"Stick out your toes—stick in your head,
Stalk on with quick, galvanic tread—
Your fingers thus extend;
The attitude's considered quaint."
The weary Bishop, feeling faint,
Replied, "I do not say it ain't,
But 'Time!' my Christian friend!"

"We now proceed to something new—
Dance as the PAYNES and LAURIS do,
Like this—one, two—one, two—one, two."
The Bishop, never proud,

But in an overwhelming heat
(His name was PETER, I repeat)
Performed the PAYNE and LAURI feat,
And puffed his thanks aloud.

Another game the dancer planned—
'Just take your ankle in your hand,
And try, my lord, if you can stand—
Your body stiff and stark.
If when revisiting your see,
You learnt to hop on shore—like me—
The novelty must striking be,
And must excite remark."

"No," said the worthy Bishop, "No;
That is a length to which, I trow,
Colonial Bishops cannot go.
You may express surprise
At finding Bishops deal in pride—
But, if that trick I ever tried,
I should appear undignified
In Rum-ti-Foozle's eyes.

"The islanders of Rum-ti-Foo
Are well-conducted persons, who
Approve a joke as much as you,
And laugh at it as such;
But if they saw their Bishop land,
His leg supported in his hand,
The joke they wouldn't understand—
'Twould pain them very much!"
1869. — W. S. GILBERT.

TO THE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE

BY A MISERABLE WRETCH

ROLL on, thou ball, roll on!
Through pathless realms of Space
Roll on!
What, though I'm in a sorry case?
What, though I cannot meet my bills?
What, though I suffer toothache's ills?
What, though I swallow countless pills?
Never *you* mind!
Roll on!

Roll on, thou ball, roll on!
Through seas of inky air
Roll on!
It's true I've got no shirts to wear;
It's true my butcher's bill is due
It's true my prospects all look blue—
But don't let that unsettle you!
Never *you* mind!
Roll on!

[It rolls on.

1869. — W. S. GILBERT.

GENTLE ALICE BROWN

It was a robber's daughter, and her name
was Alice Brown;
Her father was the terror of a small Italian
town;

Her mother was a foolish, weak, but amiable old thing;
But it isn't of her parents that I'm going for to sing.

As Alice was a-sitting at her window-sill one day,

A beautiful young gentleman he chanced to pass that way;

She cast her eyes upon him, and he looked so good and true,

That she thought, "I could be happy with a gentleman like you!"

And every morning passed her house that cream of gentlemen,

She knew she might expect him at a quarter unto ten,

A sorter in the Custom-house, it was his daily road

(The Custom-house was fifteen minutes' walk from her abode).

But Alice was a pious girl, who knew it wasn't wise

To look at strange young sorters with expressive purple eyes;

So she sought the village priest to whom her family confessed,

The priest by whom their little sins were carefully assessed.

"Oh, holy father," Alice said, "'t would grieve you, would it not?

To discover that I was a most disreputable lot!

Of all unhappy sinners I'm the most unhappy one!

The padre said, "Whatever have you been and gone and done?"

"I have helped mamma to steal a little kiddy from its dad,

I've assisted dear papa in cutting up a little lad.

I've planned a little burglary and forged a little check,

And slain a little baby for the coral on its neck!"

The worthy pastor heaved a sigh, and dropped a silent tear—

And said, "You mustn't judge yourself too heavily, my dear—

It's wrong to murder babies, little corals for to fleece;

But sins like these one expiates at half-a-crown apiece.

"Girls will be girls—you're very young, and flighty in your mind;

Old heads upon young shoulders we must not expect to find:

We mustn't be too hard upon these little girlish tricks—

Let's see—five crimes at half-a-crown—exactly twelve-and-six."

"Oh, father," little Alice cried, "your kindness makes me weep,

You do these little things for me so singularly cheap—

Your thoughtful liberality I never can forget;

But, O, there is another crime I haven't mentioned yet!"

"A pleasant-looking gentleman, with pretty purple eyes,

I've noticed at my window, as I've sat a-catching flies;

He passes by it every day as certain as can be—

I blush to say I've winked at him and he has winked at me!"

"For shame," said Father Paul, "my erring daughter! On my word

This is the most distressing news that I have ever heard.

Why, naughty girl, your excellent papa has pledged your hand

To a promising young robber, the lieutenant of his band!"

"This dreadful piece of news will pain your worthy parents so!

They are the most remunerative customers I know;

For many many years they've kept starvation from my doors,

I never knew so criminal a family as yours!"

"The common country folk in this insipid neighborhood

Have nothing to confess, they're so ridiculously good;

And if you marry any one respectable at all,

Why, you'll reform, and what will then become of Father Paul?"

The worthy priest, he up and drew his cowl upon his crown,

And started off in haste to tell the news to Robber Brown;

To tell him how his daughter, who now was for marriage fit,

Had winked upon a sorter, who reciprocated it.

Good Robber Brown he muffled up his anger pretty well,

He said "I have a notion, and that notion I will tell;

I will nab this gay young sorter, terrify him into fits,

And get my gentle wife to chop him into little bits.

"I've studied human nature, and I know a thing or two,

Though a girl may fondly love a living gent, as many do—

A feeling of disgust upon her senses there
will fall
When she looks upon his body chopped
particularly small."

He traced that gallant sorter to a still
suburban square;
He watched his opportunity and seized him
unaware;
He took a life-preserver and he hit him on
the head,
And Mrs. Brown dissected him before she
went to bed.

And pretty little Alice grew more settled
in her mind,
She never more was guilty of a weakness
of the kind,
Until at length good Robber Brown be-
stowed her pretty hand
On the promising young robber, the lieu-
tenant of his band.

1869. — W. S. GILBERT.

THE POLICEMAN'S LOT

[From The Pirates of Penzance.]

WHEN a felon's not engaged in his em-
ployment,
Or maturing his felonious little plans,
His capacity for innocent enjoyment
Is just as great as any honest man's.
Our feelings we with difficulty smother
When constabulary duty's to be done:
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A policeman's lot is not a happy one.

When the enterprising burglar's not a-
burgling,
When the cut-throat isn't occupied in
crime,
He loves to hear the little brook a-gurgling,
And listen to the merry village chime.
When the coster's finished jumping on his
mother,
He loves to lie a-basking in the sun:
Ah, take one consideration with another,
The policeman's lot is not a happy one!
1880. — W. S. GILBERT.

OCTOPUS

BY ALGERNON CHARLES SIN-BURN

STRANGE beauty, eight-limbed and eight-
handed,
Whence camest to dazzle our eyes?
With thy bosom bespangled and banded
With the hues of the seas and the skies;
Is thy home European or Asian,
O mystical monster marine?
Part molluscous and partly crustacean,
Betwixt and between.

Wast thou born to the sound of sea trum-
pets,
Hast thou eaten and drunk to excess
Of the sponges—thy muffins and crum-
pets,

Of the seaweed—thy mustard and
cress?
Wast thou nurtured in caverns of coral,
Remote from reproof or restraint?
Art thou innocent, art thou immoral,
Sinburnian or Saint?

Lithe limbs, curling free, as a creeper
That creeps in a desolate place,
To enroll and envelop the sleeper
In a silent and stealthy embrace,
Cruel beak craning forward to bite us,
Our juices to drain and to drink,
Or to whelm us in waves of 'Cocytus,
Indelible ink!

O breast, that 'twere rapture to writhe on!
O arms 'twere delicious to feel
Clinging close with the crush of the Py-
thon,
When she maketh her murderous meal!
In thy eight-fold embraces enfolden,
Let our empty existence escape;
Give us death that is glorious and golden,
'Crushed all out of shape!

Ah! thy red lips, lascivious and luscious,
With death in their amorous kiss,
Cling round us, and clasp us, and crush us,
With bitings of agonised bliss;
We are sick with the poison of pleasure,
Dispense us the potion of pain;
Ope thy mouth to its uttermost measure
And bite us again!

1872. — A. C. HILTON.

WANDERERS

As o'er the hill we roamed at will,
My dog and I together,
We mark'd a chaise, by two bright bays,
Slow-moved along the heather:

Two bays arch neck'd, with tails erect
And gold upon their blinkers;
And by their side an ass I spied;
It was a travelling tinker's.

The chaise went by, nor aught cared I;
Such things are not in my way:
I turn'd me to the tinker, who
Was loafing down a by-way:

I ask'd him where he lived—a stare
Was all I got in answer,
As on he trudged: I rightly judged
The stare said, "Where I can, sir."

I ask'd him if he'd take a whiff
Of bacco; he acceded;
He grew communicative too,
(A pipe was all he needed.)
Till of the tinker's life, I think,
I knew as much as he did.

"I loiter down by thorp and town;
For any job I'm willing;
Take here and there a dusty brown,
And here and there a shilling.

"I deal in every ware in turn,
I've rings for buddin' Sally
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n,
I've liquor for the valet.

"I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,
I hide by th' squire's covers;
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's
The art of trapping lovers.

"The things I've done 'neath moon and stars
Have got me into messes;
I've seen the sky through prison bars,
I've torn up prison dresses:

"I've sat, I've sigh'd, I've gloom'd, I've glanced
With envy at the swallows
That through the window slid, and danced
(Quite happy) round the gallows;

"But out again I come, and show
My face nor care a stiver,
For trades are brisk and trades are slow,
But mine goes on for ever."

Thus on he prattled like a babbling brook.
Then I, "The sun had slipt behind the hill,
And my aunt Vivian dines at half-past six."

So in all love we parted; I to the Hall,
They to the village. It was noised next noon

That chickens had been miss'd at Syllabub Farm.

1872. — C. S. CALVERLEY.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM IN A NUTSHELL

ONE, who is not, we see: but one, whom we see not, is:

Surely this is not that: but that is assuredly this.

What, and wherefore, and whence? for under is over and under:

If thunder could be without lightning, lightning could be without thunder.

Doubt is faith in the main: but faith, on the whole, is doubt:

We cannot believe by proof: but could we believe without?

Why, whither, and how? for barley and rye are not clover:
Neither are straight lines curves: yet over is under and over.

Two and two may be four, but four and four are not eight:
Fate and God may be twain: but God is the same thing as fate.

Ask a man what he thinks, and get from a man what he feels:
God, once caught in the fact, shows you a fair pair of heels.

Body and spirit are twins: God only knows which is which:
The soul squats down in the flesh, like a tinker drunk in a ditch.

More is the whole than a part: but half is more than the whole:
Clearly, the soul is the body: but is not the body the soul?

One and two are not one: but one and nothing is two:
Truth can hardly be false, if falsehood cannot be true.

Once the mastodon was: pterodactyls were as common as cocks:
Then the mammoth was God: now is He a prize ox.

Parallels all things are: yet many of these are askew:
You are certainly I: but certainly I am not you.

Springs the rock from the plain, shoots the stream from the rock:
Cocks exist for the hen, but hens exist for for the cock.

God, whom we see not, is: and God, who is not, we see:

Fiddle, we know, is diddle: and diddle, we take it is dee.

1880.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

NEPHELIDIA *Pearly dew.*

FROM the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn through a notable nimbus of nebulous noonsine,

Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-flower that flickers with fear of the flies as they float,

Are the looks of our lovers that lustrously lean from a marvel of mystic miraculous moonshine,

These that we feel in the blood of our blushes that thicken and threaten with throbs through the throat?

Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at
 appeal of an actor's appalled agitation,
 Fainter with fear of the fires of the
 future that pale with the promise of
 pride in the past;

Flushed with the famishing fulness of fever
 that reddens with radiance of rathe
 recreation,

Gaunt as the ghestliest of glimpses that
 gleam through the gloom of the gloam-
 ing when ghosts go aghast?

Nay, for the nick of the tick of the time is
 a tremulous touch on the temples of
 terror,

Strained as the sinews yet strenuous with
 strife of the dead who is dumb as the
 dust-heaps of death:

Surely no soul is it, sweet as the spasm of
 erotic emotional exquisite error,

Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss,
 beatific itself by beatitudes' breath.

Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that
 was soft to the spirit and soul of our
 senses

Sweetens the stress of suspiring sus-
 picion that sobs in the semblance and
 sound of a sigh;

Only this oracle opens Olympian, in myst-
 ical moods and triangular tenses—

"Life is the lust of a lamp for the light
 that is dark till the dawn of the day
 when we die."

Mild is the mirk and monotonous music of
 memory, melodiously mute as it may
 be,

While the hope in the heart of a hero
 is bruised by the breach of men's
 rapiers, resigned to the rod;

Made meek as a mother whose bosom-
 beats bound with the bliss-bringing
 bulk of a balm-breathing baby,

As they grope through the grave-yard
 of creeds, under skies growing green at
 a groan for the grimness of God.

Blank is the book of his bounty beholden
 of old, and its binding is blacker than
 bluer:

Out of blue into black is the scheme of
 the skies, and their dews are the wine
 of the bloodshed of things;

Till the darkling desire of delight shall be
 free as a fawn that is freed from the
 fangs that pursue her,

Till the heart-beats of hell shall be
 hushed by a hymn from the hunt that
 has harried the kennel of kings.

1880.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

TO R. K.

Will there never come a season
 Which shall rid us from the curse
 Of a prose which knows no reason
 And an unmelodious verse:
 When the world shall cease to wonder
 At the genius of an ass,
 And a boy's eccentric blunder
 Shall not bring success to pass:

When mankind shall be delivered
 From the clash of magazines,
 And the inkstands shall be shivered
 Into countless smithereens:
 When there stands a muzzled stripling,
 Mute, beside a muzzled bore:
 When the Rudyards cease from kipling
 And the Haggards ride no more.

1891.

J. K. STEPHEN.

A SONNET

Two voices are there: one is of the deep;
 It learns the storm-cloud's thunderous
 melody,

Now roars, now murmurs with the chang-
 ing sea,

Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in
 sleep;

And one is of an old half-witted sheep
 Which bleats articulate monotony,
 And indicates that two and one are three,
 That grass is green, lakes damp, and moun-
 tains steep:

And, Wordsworth, both are thine; at cer-
 tain times,

Forth from the heart of thy melodious
 rhymes

The form and pressure of high thoughts
 will burst:

At other times—good Lord! I'd rather be
 Quite unacquainted with the A. B. C.

Than write such hopeless rubbish as thy
 worst.

1891.

—J. K. STEPHEN.

GEORGE MEREDITH

[1828-1909]

THE WOODS OF WESTERMAIN

[1862.]

I

ENTER these enchanted woods,
You who dare.
Nothing harms beneath the leaves
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver, and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

II

Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:
Yaffles on a chuckle skim
Low to laugh from branches dim:
Up the pine, where sits the star,
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.
Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
Then beware.
Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

III

Open hither, open hence,
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,
Where the strawberry runs red,
With white star-flower overhead;
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,
Mine of mole and spotted flint:
Of dire wizardry no hint,
Save mayhap the print that shows
Hasty outward-tripping toes,
Heels to terror, on the mould.
These, the woods of Westermain,
Are as others to behold,
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;
Foliage lustreful around
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,
Shelter eager minikins,

Myriads, free to peck and pipe:
Would you better? would you worse?
You with them may gather ripe
Pleasures flowing not from purse.
Quick and far as Colour flies
Taking the delighted eyes,
You of any well that springs
May unfold the heaven of things;
Have it homely and within,
And thereof its likeness win,
Will you so in soul's desire:
This do sages grant t' the lyre.
This is being bird and more,
More than glad musician this;
Granaries you will have a store
Past the world of woe and bliss;
Sharing still its bliss and woe;
Harnessed to its hungers, no.
On the throne Success usurps,
You shall seat the joy you feel
Where a race of water chirps,
Twisting hues of flourished steel:
Or where light is caught in hoop
Up a clearing's leafy rise,
Where the crossing deerherds troop
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
Speculation with the cud,
Read their pool of vision through,
Back to hours when mind was mud;
Nigh the knot, which did untwine
Timelessly to drowsy suns;
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,
Heaven a space for winging tons.
Farther, deeper, may you read,
Have you sight for things afieid,
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed;
Showing a kind face and sweet:
Look you with the soul you see 't.
Glory narrowing to grace,
Grace to glory magnified,
Following that will you embrace
Close in arms or aëry wide.
Banished is the white Foam-born
Not from here, nor under ban
Phœbus lyrist, Phœbe's horn,
Pipings of the reedy Pan.
Loved of Earth of old they were,
Loving did interpret her;
And the sterner worship bars
None whom Song has made her stars.
You have seen the huntress moon
Radiantly facing dawn,
Dusky meads between them strewn

Glimmering like downy awn:
 Argent Westward glows the hunt,
 East the blush about to climb;
 One another fair they front,
 Transient, yet outshine the time;
 Even as dewlight off the rose
 In the mind a jewel sows.
 Thus opposing grandeurs live
 Here if Beauty be their dower:
 Doth she of her spirit give,
 Fleetingness will spare her flower.
 This is in the tune we play,
 Which no spring of strength would quell;
 In subduing does not slay;
 Guides the channel, guards the well:
 Tempered holds the young blood-heat,
 Yet through measured grave accord,
 Hears the heart of wildness beat
 Like a centaur's hoof on sward.
 Drink the sense the notes infuse,
 You a larger self will find:
 Sweetest fellowship ensues
 With the creatures of your kind.
 Ay, and Love, if Love it be
 Flaming over *I* and *ME*,
 Love meet they who do not shove
 Cravings in the van of Love.
 Courtly dames are here to woo,
 Knowing love if it be true.
 Reverence the blossom-shoot
 Fervently, they are the fruit.
 Mark them stepping, hear them talk,
 Goddess, is no myth inane,
 You will say of those who walk
 In the woods of Westernmain.
 Waters that from throat and thigh
 Dart the sun his arrows back;
 Leaves that on a woodland sigh
 Chat of secret things no lack;
 Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear.
 Bare or veiled they move sincere;
 Not by slavish terrors tripped;
 Being anew in nature dipped,
 Growths of what they step on, these;
 With the roots the grace of trees.
 Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,
 For a tyrant's flattered pride,
 Mind, which nourished not by light,
 Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite:
 Whereof are strange tales to tell;
 Some in blood writ, tomb'd in bell.
 Here the ancient battle ends,
 Joining two astonished friends,
 Who the kiss can give and take
 With more warmth than in that world
 Where the tiger claws the snake,
 Snake her tiger clasps infurled,
 And the issue of their fight
 Peoples lands in snarling plight.
 Here her splendid beast she leads
 Silken-leashed and deck'd with weeds
 Wild as he, but breathing faint
 Sweetness of unfelt constraint.

Love, the great volcano, flings
 Fires of lower Earth to sky;
 Love, the sole permitted, sings
 Sovereignly of *ME* and *I*.
 Bowers he has of sacred shade,
 Spaces of superb parade,
 Voiceful . . . But bring you a note
 Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,
 Discords out of discord spin
 Round and round derisive din:
 Sudden will a pallor pant
 Chill at screeches miscreant;
 Owls or spectres, thick they flee;
 Nightmare upon horror broods;
 Hooded laughter, monkish glee,
 Gaps the vital air.
 Enter these enchanted woods
 You who dare.

IV

You must love the light so well
 That no darkness will seem fell.
 Love it so you could accost
 Fellowly a livid ghost.
 Wish! the phantom wisps away,
 Owns him smoke to cocks of day.
 In your breast the light must burn
 Fed of you, like corn in quern
 Ever plumping while the wheel
 Speeds the mill and drains the meal.
 Light to light sees little strange,
 Only features heavenly new;
 Then you touch the nerve of Change,
 Then of Earth you have the clue;
 Then her two-sexed meanings melt
 Through you, wed the thought and felt.
 Sameness locks no scurfy pond
 Here for Custom, crazy-fond:
 Change is on the wing to bud
 Rose in brain from rose in blood.
 Wisdom throbbing shall you see
 Central in complexity;
 From her pasture 'mid the beasts
 Rise to her ethereal feasts,
 Not, though lightnings track your wit
 Starward, scorning them you quit:
 For be sure the bravest wing
 Preen's it in our common spring,
 Thence along the vault to soar,
 You with others, gathering more,
 Glad of more, till you reject
 Your proud title of elect,
 Perilous even here while few
 Roam the arched greenwood with you.
 Heed that snare.
 Muffled by his cavern-cowl
 Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,
 Who was lord ere light you drank,
 And lest blood of knightly rank
 Stream, let not your fair princess
 Stray: he holds the leagues in stress,
 Watches keenly there.
 Oft has he been riven; slain
 Is no force in Westernmain.

Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,
Put his fangs to uses, tame,
Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,
How to cure him sick and lame.
Much restricted, much enringed,
Much he frets, the hooked and winged,

Never known to spare.

'T is enough: the name of Sage
Hits no thing in nature, nought;
Man the least, save when grave Age
From yon Dragon guards his thought.
Eye him when you hearken dumb
To what words from Wisdom come.
When she says how few are by
Listening to her, eye his eye.

Self, his name declare.

Him shall Change, transforming late,
Wonderously renovate.
Hug himself the creature may:
What he hugs is loathed decay.
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough!
Change will strip his armour off;
Make of him who was all maw,
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,
Such a servant as none saw
Through his days of dragonhood.
Days when growling o'er his bone,
Sharpened he for mine and thine;
Sensitive within alone;
Scaly as in clefts of pine.
Change, the strongest son of Life,
Has the Spirit here to wife.
Lo, their young of vivid breed,
Bear the lights that onward speed,
Threading thickets, mounting glades,
Up the verdurous colonnades,
Round the fluttered curves, and down,
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,
Whither, in her central space,
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.
Fount unresting, Lure divine!
There meet all: too late look most.
Fire in water hued as wine,
Springs amid a shadowy host;
Circled: one close-headed mob,
Breathless, scanning divers heaps
Where a Heart begins to throb,
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps.
And 't is very strange, 't is said,
How you spy in each of them
Semblance of that Dragon red,
As the oak in bracken-stem.
And, 't is said, how each and each:
Which commences, which subsides:
First my Dragon! doth beseech
Her who food for all provides.
And she answers with no sign;
Utters neither yea nor nay;
Fires the water hued as wine;
Kneads another spark in clay.
Terror is about her hid;
Silence of the thunders locked;
Lightnings lining the shut lid;
Fixity on quaking rocked.

Lo, you look at Flow and Drought
Interflashed and interwrought:
Ended is begun, begun
Ended, quick as torrents run.
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;
Luridness and lustre link;
'T is your come and go of breath;
Mirrored pants the Life, the Death;
Each of either reaped and sown:
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.
See you, so? your senses drift;
'T is a shuttle weaving swift.
Look with spirit past the sense,
Spirit shines in permanence.
That is She, the view of whom
Is the dust within the tomb,
Is the inner blush above,
Look to loathe, or look to love;
Think her Lump, or know her Flame;
Dread her scourge, or read her aim;
Shoot your hungers from their nerve;
Or, in her example, serve.
Some have found her sitting grave;
Laughing, some; or, browed with sweat,
Hurling dust of fool and knave
In a hissing smithy's jet.
More it were not well to speak;
Burn to see, you need but seek.
Once beheld she gives the key
Airing every doorway, she.
Little can you stop or steer
Ere of her you are the seer.
On the surface she will witch,
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze
Under, and the soul is rich
Past computing, past amaze.
Then is courage that endures
Even her awful tremble yours.
Then, the reflex of that Fount
Spied below, will Reason mount
Lordly and a quenchless force,
Lighting Pain to its mad source,
Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,
Shot through all its phantom shapes.
Then your spirit will perceive
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins;
Where the passions interweave,
How the serpent tangle spins
Of the sense of Earth misprised,
Brainlessly unrecognized;
She being Spirit in her cloths,
Footway to the God of gods.
Then for you are pleasures pure,
Sureties as the stars are sure:
Not the wanton beckoning flags
Which, of flattery and delight,
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags
Riding souls of men to night:
Pleasures that through blood run sane,
Quickening spirit from the brain.
Each of each in sequent birth,
Blood and brain and spirit, three
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth).
Join for true felicity.

Are they parted, then expect
 Some one sailing will be wrecked:
 Separate hunting are they sped,
 Scan the morsel coveted.
 Earth that Triad is: she hides
 Joy from him who that divides;
 Showers it when the three are one
 Glassing her in union.
 Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
 You command a double realm:
 Labouring here to pay your debt,
 Till your little sun shall set;
 Leaving her the future task:
 Loving her too well to ask.
 Eglantine that climbs the yew,
 She her darkest wreathes for those
 Knowing her the Ever-new,
 And themselves the kin o' the rose.
 Life, the chisel, axe and sword,
 Wield who have her depths explored:
 Life, the dream, shall be their robe,
 Large as air about the globe;
 Life, the question, hear its cry
 Echoed with concordant Why;
 Life, the small self-dragon ramped,
 Thrill for service to be stamped.
 Ay, and over every height
 Life for them shall wave a wand:
 That, the last, where sits affright,
 Homely shows the stream beyond.
 Love the light and be its lynx,
 You will track her and attain;
 Read her as no cruel Sphinx
 In the woods of Westernmain.
 Daily fresh the woods are ranged;
 Glooms which elsewhere appal,
 Sounded: here, their worths exchanged,
 Urban joins with pastoral:
 Little lost, save what may drop
 Husk-like, and the mind preserves.
 Natural overgrowths they lop,
 Yet from nature neither swerves,
 Trained or savage: for this cause:
 Of our Earth they ply the laws,
 Have in Earth their feeding root,
 Mind of man and bent of brute.
 Hear that song; both wild and ruled.
 Hear it: is it wail or mirth?
 Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled?
 None, and all: it springs of Earth.
 O but hear it! 't is the mind;
 Mind that with deep Earth unites,
 Round the solid trunk to wind
 Rings of clasping parasites.
 Music have you there to feed
 Simplest and most soaring need.
 Free to wind, and in desire
 Winding, they to her attached
 Feel the trunk a spring of fire.
 And ascend to heights unmatched,
 Whence the tidal world is viewed
 As a sea of windy wheat,
 Momently black, barren, rude;

Golden-brown, for harvest meet;
 Dragon-reaped from folly-sown;
 Bride-like to the sickle-blade:
 Quick it varies, while the moan,
 Moan of a sad creature strayed,
 Chiefly is its voice. So flesh
 Conjures tempest-flails to thresh
 Good from worthless. Some clear lamps
 Light it; more of dead marsh-damps.
 Monster is it still, and blind,
 Fit but to be led by Pain.
 Glance we at the paths behind,
 Fruitful sight has Westernmain.
 There we laboured, and in turn
 Forward our blown lamps discern,
 As you see on the dark deep
 Far the loftier billows leap,
 Foam for beacon bear.
 Hither, hither, if you will,
 Drink instruction, or instil,
 Run the woods like vernal sap,
 Crying, hail to luminousness!

But have care.
 In yourself may lurk the trap:
 On conditions they caress.
 Here you meet the light invoked:
 Here is never secret cloaked.
 Doubt you with the monster's fry
 All his orbit may exclude;
 Are you of the stiff, the dry,
 Cursing the not understood;
 Grasp you with the monster's claws;
 Govern with his truncheon-saws;
 Hate, the shadow of a grain;
 You are lost in Westernmain:
 Earthward swoops a vulture sun,
 Nighted upon carrion:
 Straightway venom winecups shout
 Toasts to One whose eyes are out:
 Flowers along the reeling floor
 Drip henbane and hellebore:
 Beauty, of her tresses shorn,
 Shrieks as nature's maniac:
 Hideousness on hoof and horn
 Tumbles, yapping in her track:
 Haggard Wisdom, stately once,
 Leers fantastical and trips:
 Allegory drums the scone,
 Impiousness nibbles pins.
 Imp that dances, imp that flits,
 Imp o' the demon-growing girl,
 Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits
 Round you, and with them you whirl
 Fast where pours the fountain-rot
 Out of Him whose eyes are out:
 Multitudes on multitudes,
 Drenched in wallowing devilry:
 And you ask where you may be,
 In what reek of a lair
 Given to bones and ogre-broods:
 And they yell you Where.
 Enter these enchanted woods,
 You who dare.

THE LARK ASCENDING

[1862.]

HE rises and begins to round,
 He drops the silver chain of sound,
 Of many links without a break,
 In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
 All interwoven and spreading wide,
 Like water-dimples down a tide
 Where ripple ripple overcurls
 And eddy into eddy whirls;
 A press of hurried notes that run
 So fleet they scarce are more than one,
 Yet changeingly the trills repeat
 And linger ringing while they fleet,
 Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
 To her beyond the handmaid ear,
 Who sits beside our inner springs,
 Too often dry for this he brings,
 Which seems the very jet of earth
 At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
 As up he wings the spiral stair,
 A song of light, and pierces air
 With fountain ardour, fountain play,
 To reach the shining tops of day,
 And drink in everything discerned
 An ecstasy to music turned,
 Impelled by what his happy bill
 Disperses; drinking, showering still,
 Unthinking save that he may give
 His voice the outlet, there to live
 Renewed in endless notes of glee,
 So thirsty of his voice is he,
 For all to hear and all to know
 That he is joy, awake, aglow,
 The tumult of the heart to hear
 Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
 And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
 By simple singing of delight,
 Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
 Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
 Without a break, without a fall,
 Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
 Perennial, quavering up the chord
 Like myriad dews of sunny sward
 That trembling into fulness shine,
 And sparkle dropping argentine;
 Such wooing as the ear receives
 From zephyr caught in choric leaves
 Of aspens when their chattering net
 Is flushed to white with shivers wet;
 And such the water-spirit's chime
 On mountain heights in morning's prime,
 Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
 Too animate to need a stress;
 But wider over many heads
 The starry voice ascending spreads,
 Awakening, as it waxes thin,
 The best in us to him akin;
 And every face to watch him raised,
 Puts on the light of children praised,
 So rich our human pleasure ripens
 When sweetness on sincereness pipes,

Though nought be promised from the seas,
 But only a soft-ruffling breeze
 Sweep glittering on a still content,
 Serenity in ravishment.

For singing till his heaven fills,
 'T is love of earth that he instils,
 And ever winging up and up,
 Our valley is his golden cup,
 And he the wine which overflows
 To lift us with him as he goes:
 The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine
 He is, the hills, the human line,
 The meadows green, the fallows brown,
 The dreams of labour in the town;
 He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
 The wedding song of sun and rains
 He is, the dance of children, thanks
 Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
 And eye of violets while they breathe;
 All these the circling song will wreath,
 And you shall hear the herb and tree,
 The better heart of men shall see,
 Shall feel celestially, as long
 As you crave nothing save the song.
 Was never voice of ours could say
 Our inmost in the sweetest way,
 Like yonder voice aloft, and link
 All hearers in the song they drink.
 Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
 Our passion is too full in flood,
 We want the key of his wild note
 Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
 The song seraphically free
 Of taint of personality,
 So pure that it salutes the suns
 The voice of one for millions,
 In whom the millions rejoice
 For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,
 Now names, and men still housing here,
 Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
 Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
 Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
 For song our highest heaven to greet:
 Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
 Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
 From firmest base to farthest leap,
 Because their love of Earth is deep,
 And they are warriors in accord
 With life to serve, and pass reward,
 So touching purest and so heard
 In the brain's reflex of yon bird:
 Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
 Through self-forgetfulness divine,
 In them, that song aloft maintains,
 To fill the sky and thrill the plains
 With showerings drawn from human
 stores,
 As he to silence nearer soars,
 Extends the world at wings and dome,
 More spacious making more our home,
 Till lost on his aerial rings
 In light, and then the fancy sings.

MELAMPUS

[1862.]

WITH love exceeding a simple love of the things

That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;

Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings

From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;

Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;

Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;

The good physician Melampus, loving them all,

Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key

Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and towers.

The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we

To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours:

And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined

Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows

In them, in us, from the source by man unattained

Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast

Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,

The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best

Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape:

For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,

As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:

They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,

And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,

Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain

Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods

Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane

The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limns

To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life

Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns

Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

Now sleeping once on a day of marvellous fire,

A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret

That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,

Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set

Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue

Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears

A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,

He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech

Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves

To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach;

He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.

No fears have I of a man who goes with his head

To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:

I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;

I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist:

He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.

Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,

He spied the birds and the bill of the speaking bird.

His cushion mosses in shades of various green,

The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake

Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,

It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,

As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,

Ere yet they dart in a brook are one bubble-pool

To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.

The soul of light vivid shone, a stream
 within stream;
 The soul of sound from a musical shell
 outflow;
 Where others hear but a hum and see but
 a beam,
 The tongue and eye of the fountain of
 life he knew.

He knew the Hours: they were round him,
 laden with seed
 Of hours bestrewn upon vapour, and one
 by one
 They winged as ripened in fruit the burden
 decreed
 For each to scatter; they flushed like
 the buds in sun,
 Bequeathing seed to successive similar
 rings,
 Their sisters, bearers to men of what
 men have earned:
 He knew them, talked with the yet unred-
 dened; the stings,
 The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms
 divined, discerned.

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,
 By riddling fingers expanded, oft
 watched in growth
 With brooding deep as the noon-ray's
 quickening wheat,
 Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the
 plants of sloth,
 The plants of rigidity, answered question
 and squeeze,
 Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninvit-
 ing, bent,
 Yet making harmony breathe of life and
 disease,
 The deeper chord of a wonderful instru-
 ment.

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and
 the fates
 We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears
 were charged
 With tones of love in a whirl of voluble
 hates,
 With music wrought of distraction his
 hear enlarged.
 Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer,
 though mute,
 He drew the Master of harmonies,
 voiced or stilled,
 To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-
 root
 A song, beheld in fulfilment the unful-
 filled.

Him Phœbus, lending to darkness colour
 and form
 Of light's excess, many lessons and
 counsels gave;

Showed Wisdom lord of the human intri-
 cate swarm,
 And whence prophetic it looks on the
 hives that rave,
 And how acquired, of the zeal of love to
 acquire,
 And where it stands, in the centre of life
 a sphere;
 And Measure, mood of the lyre, the raptur-
 ous lyre,
 He said was Wisdom, and struck him
 the notes to hear.

Sweet, sweet: 't was glory of vision, honey,
 the breeze
 In heat, the run of the river on root and
 stone,
 All senses joined, as the sister Pierides
 Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine,
 his own.
 In stately order, evolved of sound into
 sight,
 From sight to sound intershifting, the
 man descried
 The growths of earth, his adored, like day
 out of night,
 Ascend in song, seeing nature and song
 allied.

And there vitality, there, there solely in
 song,
 Resides, where earth and her uses to men,
 their needs,
 Their forceful cravings, the theme are:
 there is it strong,
 The Master said: and the studious eye
 that reads,
 (Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods
 on the mount),
 In links divine with the lyrical tongue is
 bound.

Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a
 fount
 To spring perennial; well-spring is com-
 mon ground.

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and
 sage,
 He served them, loving them, healing
 them; sick or maimed
 Or them that frenzied in some delirious
 rage
 Outran the measure, his juice of the
 woods reclaimed.

He played on men, as his master, Phœbus,
 on strings
 Melodious: as the God did he drive and
 check,
 Through love exceeding a simple love of
 the things
 That glide in grasses and rubble of woody
 wreck.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

[1862.]

UNDER yonder beech-tree single on the
 green-sward,
 Couched with her arms behind her golden
 head,
 Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple
 idly,
 Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
 Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath
 her,
 Press her parting lips as her waist I
 gather slow,
 Waking in amazement she could not but
 embrace me:
 Then would she hold me and never let
 me go?

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the
 swallow,
 Swift as the swallow along the river's
 light
 Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored
 winglets,
 Fleeter she seems in her stay than in
 her flight.
 Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the
 pine-tops,
 Wayward as the swallow overhead at
 set of sun,
 She whom I love is hard to catch and
 conquer,
 Hard, but O the glory of the winning
 were she won!

When her mother tends her before the
 laughing mirror,
 Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
 Often she thinks, were this wild thing
 wedded,
 More love should I have, and much less
 care.
 When her mother tends her before the
 lighted mirror,
 Loosening her laces, combing down her
 curls,
 Often she thinks, were this wild thing
 wedded,
 I should miss but one for many boys and
 girls.

Heartless she is as the shadow in the
 meadows
 Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy
 noon.
 No, she is athirst and drinking up her
 wonder:
 Earth to her is young as the slip of
 the new moon.
 Deals she an unkindness, 't is but her rapid
 measure,

Even as in a dance; and her smile can
 heal no less:
 Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the
 flowers with hailstones
 Off a sunny border, she was made to
 bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl
 sweeping
 Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
 Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note un-
 varied,
 Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown
 evejar.
 Darker grows the valley, more and more
 forgetting:
 So were it with me if forgetting could
 be willed.
 Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bub-
 bling well-spring,
 Tell it to forget the source that keeps it
 filled.

Stepping down the hill with her fair com-
 panions,
 Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
 Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she
 marches,
 Brave is her shape, and sweeter unpos-
 sessed.
 Sweeter, for she is what my heart first
 awaking
 Whispered the world was; morning light
 is she.
 Love that so desires would fain keep her
 changeless;
 Fain would fling the net, and fain have
 her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star
 hovers
 Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy
 dew,
 Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart
 the darkness,
 Threading it with colour, like yewberries
 the yew.
 Thicker crowd the shades as the grave
 East deepens
 Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud
 swells.
 Maiden still the morn is; and strange she
 is, and secret;
 Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as
 cold sea-shells.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and
 lighting
 Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills
 along,
 Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant
 laughter
 Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.

Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-
feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are
shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream,
there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without
end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant
to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released
from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-
lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the
streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck
to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs
of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the
day.

Mother of the dew, dark eye-lashed twi-
light,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's
brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-
delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their
voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the
rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying foun-
tain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her
ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above
the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for
the primrose;
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in
joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but
now she loiters,
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her
hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are
peeping,
Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odours and for
colour,
Covert and the nightingale; she knows
not why.

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between
her tulips,
Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy
rain:

Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their
angel
She will be; she lifts them, and on she
speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron
gateway:
She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking
mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb
for thunder
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of
earth.
Prim little scholars are the flowers of her
garden,
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if
they please.
I might love them well but for loving more
the wild ones:
O my wild ones! they tell me more than
these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honied field-
rose,
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and
even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your
goodness,
You are of life's, on the banks that line
the way.

Peering at her chamber the white crowns
the red rose,
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two
and three.
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the
starry jasmine
Breathes a falling breath that carries
thoughts of me.
Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my
sweetest?
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the
jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love; she sleeps; the starry
jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-
wreaths.
Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-
glades;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey
leaf;
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds
are yellow;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing
to the sheaf.
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the
laughing yaffle;
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade
and shine:
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the
heavens,
Thinking of the harvest: I look and think
of mine.

This I may know: her dressing and undressing

Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport

Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder

Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port

White sails furl; or on the ocean borders White sails lean along the waves leaping green.

Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight

Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse

Open with the morn, and in a breezy link

Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,

Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.

Busy in the grass the early sun of summer Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes

Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:

Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy

Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from school,

Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;

O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!

Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher

Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.

Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tip-toe,

Said, 'I will kiss you'; she laughed and leaned her cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof

Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.

Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway

Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.

Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river. Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.

Nowhere is she seen, and if I see her nowhere,

Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!

O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

O the treasure-tresses one another over Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!

Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet

Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,

Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness!

O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,

Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:

Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,

Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.

Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree

Gazes in this whiteness; nightlong could I. Here may life on death or death on life be painted.

Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

Gossips count her faults: they scour a narrow chamber

Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.

'When she was a tiny,' one aged woman quavers,

Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.

Faults she had once as she learnt to run and tumbled:

Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.

Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,

Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise

High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;

Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.

Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,

Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.—

Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting, Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

Soon will she lie like a white frost sunrise.
 Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale
 as rye,
 Long since your sheaves have yielded to the
 thrasher,
 Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses
 fly.
 Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
 Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged
 Spring!
 Sing from the South-West, bring her back
 the truants,
 Nightingale and swallow, song and dip-
 ping wing.
 Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
 Spreading bough on bough a primrose
 mountain, you
 Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the sky-
 fields,
 Youngest green transfused in silver shin-
 ing through:
 Fairer than the lily, than the wild white
 cherry:
 Fair as in image my seraph love appears
 Borne to me by dreams when dawn is
 at my eyelids:
 Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on
 tears.

Could I find a place to be alone with
 heaven,
 I would speak my heart out: heaven is
 my need.
 Every woodland tree is flushing like the
 dogwood,
 Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like
 the reed.
 Flushing like the dogwood crimson in
 October;
 Streaming like the flag-reed South-West
 blown;
 Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted
 whitebeam:
 All seem to know what is for heaven
 alone.

JUGGLING JERRY

[1862.]

PITCH here the tent, while the old horse
 grazes:
 By the old hedge-side we 'll halt a stage.
 It 's nigh my last above the daisies:
 My next leaf 'll be man's blank page.
 Yes, my old girl! and it 's no use crying:
 Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
 One that outjuggles all 's been spying
 Long to have me, and he has me now.
 We've travelled times to this old common:
 Often we've hung our pots in the gorse.
 We've had a stirring life, old woman!
 You, and I, and the old grey horse.

Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
 Found us coming to their call:
 Now they 'll miss us at our stations:
 There 's a juggler outjuggles all!

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!
 Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.
 Easy to think that grieving 's folly,
 When the hand 's firm as driven stakes!
 Ay, when we 're strong, and braced, and
 manful,
 Life 's a sweet fiddle: but we 're a batch
 Born to become the Great Juggler's han-
 ful:
 Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

Here 's where the lads of the village
 cricket:
 I was a lad not wide from here:
 Could n't I whip off the bale from the
 wicket?
 Like an old world those days appear!
 Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatched ale-
 house—I know them!
 They are old friends of my halts, and
 seem,
 Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:
 Juggling don't hinder the heart's es-
 teem.

Juggling 's no sin, for we must have vic-
 tual:
 Nature allows us to bait for the fool.
 Holding one's own makes us juggle no
 little;
 But, to increase it, hard juggling 's the
 rule.
 You that are sneering at my profession,
 Have n't you juggled a vast amount?
 There 's the Prime Minister, in one Ses-
 sion,
 Juggles more games than my sins 'll
 count.

I've murdered insects with mock thunder:
 Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.
 I've made bread from the bump of won-
 der:
 That 's my business, and there 's my
 tale.
 Fashion and rank all praised the professor:
 Ay! and I've had my smile from the
 Queen:
 Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!
 Ain't this a sermon on that scene?

I've studied men from my topsy-turvy
 Close, and, I reckon, rather true.
 Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:
 Most, a dash between the two.
 But it's a woman, old girl, that makes me
 Think more kindly of the race:
 And it's a woman, old girl, that shakes me
 When the Great Juggler I must face.

We two were married, due and legal:

Honest we 've lived since we 've been one.

Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:

You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.

Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!

All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.

Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!

Now from his old girl he 's juggled away.

It's past parsons to console us:

No, no doctor fetch for me:

I can die without my bolus;

Two of a trade, lass, never agree!

Parson and Doctor!—don't they love rarely,

Fighting the devil in other men's fields!

Stand up yourself and match him fairly:

Then see how the rascal yields!

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting

Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:

Coin I 've stored, and you won't be wanting:

You sha'n't beg from the troughs and tubs.

Nobly you 've stuck to me, though in his kitchen

Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!

Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,

But your old Jerry you never forsook.

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;

Let 's have comfort and be at peace.

Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.

Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.

May be—for none see in that black hollow—

It 's just a place where we 're held in pawn,

And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,

It 's just the sword trick—I ain't quite gone!

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,

Gold-like and warm: it 's the prime of May.

Better than mortar, brick and putty,

Is God's house on a blowing day.

Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it:

All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?

There 's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,

But He 's by us, juggling the change.

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,

Once—it 's long gone—when two gulls we beheld,

Which, as the moon got up, were flying

Down a big wave that sparkled and swelled.

Crack, went a gun: one fell: the second
Wheeled round him twice, and was off
for new luck:

There in the dark her white wing beck-
on'd:—

Drop me a kiss—I 'm the bird dead-
struck!

LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

[1862.]

ON a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose
Tired of his dark dominion swung the
fiend

Above the rolling ball in cloud part
screened,

Where sinners hugged their spectre of re-
pose.

Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were
those.

And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands
careened,

Now the black planet shadowed Arctic
snows.

Soaring through wider zones that pricked
his scars

With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the
stars,

Which are the brain of heaven, he looked,
and sank.

Around the ancient track marched, rank
on rank,

The army of unalterable law.

SENSE AND SPIRIT

[1862.]

THE senses loving Earth or well or ill,

Ravel yet more the riddle of our lot.

The mind is in their trammels, and lights
not

By trimming fear-bred tales; nor does the
will

To find in nature things which less may
chill

An ardour that desires, unknowing what.

Till we conceive her living we go dis-
traught,

At best but circle-windsails of a mill.

Seeing she lives, and of her joy of life

Creatively 'has given us blood and breath
For endless war and never wound un-

healed,
The gloomy Wherefore of our battle-field

Solves in the Spirit, wrought of her
through strife

To read her own and trust her down to
death.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

[1862.]

THY greatest knew thee, Mother Earth;
 unsoured
 He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to
 hell
 Of human passions, but of love deflowered
 His wisdom was not, for he knew thee
 well.
 Thence came the honeyed corner at his
 lips,
 The conquering smile wherein his spirit
 sails
 Calm as the God who the white sea-wave
 whips,
 Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
 Close mirrors of us: thence had he the
 laugh
 We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand
 beeves
 At pasture! thence thy songs, that winnow
 chaff
 From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last
 leaves
 Whirl, if they have no response—they
 enforced
 To fatten Earth when from her soul di-
 vorced.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

(Continued)

How smiles he at a generation ranked
 In gloomy noddings over life! They pass.
 Not he to feed upon a breast unthanked,
 Or eye a beauteous face in a cracked glass.
 But he can spy that little twist of brain
 Which moved some weighty leader of the
 blind,
 Unwitting 't was the goad of personal
 pain,
 To view in curst eclipse our Mother's
 mind,
 And show us of some rigid harridan
 The wretched bondmen till the end of
 time.
 O lived the Master now to paint us Man,
 That little twist of brain would ring a
 chime
 Of whence it came and what it caused, to
 start
 Thunders of laughter, clearing air and
 heart.

HARD WEATHER

[1888.]

BURSTS from a rending East in flaws
 The young green leaflet's harrier, sworn
 To strew the garden, strip the shaws,
 And show our Spring with banner torn.
 Was ever such virago morn?
 The wind has teeth, the wind has claws.

All the wind's wolves through woods are
 loose.

The wild wind's falconry aloft.
 Shrill underfoot the grassblade shrews,
 At gallop, clumped, and down the croft
 Bestrid by shadows, beaten, tossed;
 It seems a scythe, it seems a rod.
 The howl is up at the howl's accost;
 The shivers greet and the shivers nod.

Is the land ship? we are rolled, we drive
 Tritonly, cleaving hiss and hum;
 Whirl with the dead, or mount or dive,
 Or down in dregs, or on in scum.
 And drums the distant, pipes the near,
 And vale and hill are grey in grey,
 As when the surge is crumbling sheer,
 And sea-mews wing the haze of spray.
 Clouds—are they bony witches?—swarms,
 Darting swift on the robber's flight,
 Hurry an infant sky in arms:
 It peeps, it beck; 't is day, 't is night.
 Black while over the loop of blue
 The swathe is closed, like shroud on corse.
 Lo, as if swift the Furies flew,
 The Fates at heel at a cry to horse!

Interpret me the savage whirr:
 And is it Nature scourged, or she,
 Her offspring's executioner,
 Reducing land to barren sea?
 But is there meaning in a day
 When this fierce angel of the air,
 Intent to throw, and haply slay,
 Can, for what breath of life we bear
 Exact the wrestle? Call to mind
 The many meanings glistening up
 When Nature to her nurslings kind,
 Hands them the fruitage and the cup!
 And seek we rich significance
 Not otherwhere than with those tides
 Of pleasure on the sunned expanse,
 Whose flow deludes, whose ebb derides?

Look in the face of men who fare
 Lock-mouthed, a match in lungs and thews
 For this fierce angel of the air,
 To twist with him and take his bruise.
 That is the face beloved of old
 Of Earth, young mother of her brood:
 Nor broken for us shows the mould
 When muscle is in mind renewed:
 Though farther from her nature rude,
 Yet nearer to her spirit's hold:
 And though of gentler mood serene,
 Still forceful of her fountain-jet.
 So shall her blows be shrewdly met,
 Be luminously read the scene
 Where Life is at her grindstone set,
 That she may give us edging keen,
 String us for battle, till as play
 The common strokes of fortune shower.
 Such meaning in a dagger-day
 Our wits may clasp to wax in power,

Yea, feel us warmer at her breast,
By spin of blood in lusty drill,
Than when her honeyed hands caressed,
And Pleasure, sapping, seemed to fill.

Behold the life at ease; it drifts.
The sharpened life commands its course.
She winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,
To dip her chosen in her source:
Contention is the vital force,
Whence pluck they brain, her prize of gifts,

Sky of the senses! on which height,
Not disconnected, yet released,
They see how spirit comes to light,
Through conquest of the inner beast,
Which Measure tames to movement sane,
In harmony with what is fair.
Never is Earth misread by brain:
That is the welling of her, there
The mirror: with one step beyond,
For likewise is it voice; and more,
Benignest kinship bids respond,
When wail the weak, and then restore
Whom days as fell as this may rive,
While Earth sits ebon in her gloom,
Us atomies of life alive
Unheeding, bent on life to come.
Her children of the labouring brain,
These are the champions of the race,
True parents, and the sole humane,
With understanding for their base.
Earth yields the milk, but all her mind
Is vowed to thresh for stouter stock.
Her passion for old giantkind,
That scaled the mount, uphurled the rock,
Devolves on them who read aright
Her meaning and devoutly serve;
Nor in her starlessness of night
Peruse her with the craven nerve:
But even as she from grass to corn,
To eagle high from grubbing mole,
Prove in strong brain her noblest born,
The station for the flight of soul.

THE THRUSH IN FEBRUARY

[1888.]

I know him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and
bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,
A herald of the million bills;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbours, piping to his world: —

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down,
An image of the deluge-ebb: —

And farther, they may hear along
The stream beneath the poplar row,
By fits, like welling rocks, the song
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale
When waves of warm South-western rains
Have left our heavens clear in pale,
With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermilion wings, by distance held
To pause aflight while fleeting swift:
And high aloft the pearl inshelled
Her lucid glow in glow will lift;

A little south of coloured sky;
Directing, gravely amorous,
The human of a tender eye
Through pure celestial on us:

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;
Unraying yet, more pearl than star;
She seems a while the vale to hold
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes;
An orb of lustre quits the height;
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,
Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,
The young time with the life ahead;
And my young time his leaping note
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,
Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,
My care was but to soothe my need;
At peace among the little worths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;
To that deep breast of song and light
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;
As 't is to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich
The simple to the common brings;
I keep the youth of souls who pitch
Their joy in this old heart of things:

Who feel the Coming young as aye,
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;
Alive for life, awake to die;
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer, passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of the Thought.
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird
Of promise! bird of happy breath!
I hear, I would the City heard.

The City of the smoky fray;
A prodded ox, it drags and moans:
Its Morrow no man's child; its Day
A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

It strives without a mark for strife;
It feasts beside a famished host:
The loose restraint of wanton life,
That threatened penance in the ghost!

Yet there our battle urges; there
Spring heroes many: issuing thence.
Names that should leave no vacant air
For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,
And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.
Those warriors of the sighting brain
Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead
The tidal multitude and blind
From bestial to the higher breed
By fighting souls of love divined.

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,
Unknown in nature. This they knew:
That life begets with fair increase
Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood,
The instinct bred afield would match
To pipe thereof a swelling flood.
Were men of Earth made wise in watch.

Though now the numbers count as drops
An urn might bear, they father Time.
She shapes anew her dusty crops;
Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create;
They climb to light, in her their root.
Your brutish cry at muffled fate
She smites with pangs of worse than brute.

She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears
A Mother whom no cry can melt;
But read her past desires and fears,
The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,
To sacrifice she prompts her best:
She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,
And stars rush forth of blackest night:
You chill not at a cold embrace
To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,
In oneness rise to quench the doubt.
This breath, her gift, has only choice
Of service, breathe we in or out.

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand
Led our wild steps from slimy rock
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,
We breathe but to be sword or block.

The sighting brain her good decree
Accepts; obeys those guides, in faith,
By reason hourly fed, that she,
To some the clod, to some the wraith,

Is more, no mask; a flame, a stream.
Flame, stream, are we, in mid career
From torrent source, delirious dream,
To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been
Her cherished offspring ever; how
The Spirit served by her is seen
Through Law; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains
Vitality as Earth it mates,
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,
The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all;
Her mystic secret then is ours:
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclothed, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

OUTER AND INNER

[1888.]

I

FROM twig to twig the spider weaves
At noon his webbing fine.
So near to mute the zephyrs flute
That only leaflets dance.
The sun draws out of hazel leaves
A smell of woodland wine.
I wake a swarm to sudden storm
At any step's advance,

II

Along my path is bugloss blue,
 The star with fruit in moss;
 The foxgloves drop from throat to top
 A daily lesser bell.
 The blackest shadow, nurse of dew,
 Has orange skeins across;
 And keenly red is one thin thread
 That flashing seems to swell.

III

My world I note ere fancy comes,
 Minutest hushed observe:
 What busy bits of motioned wits
 Through antlered mosswork strive.
 But now so low the stillness hums,
 My springs of seeing swerve,
 For half a wink to thrill and think
 The woods with nymphs alive.

IV

I neighbour the invisible
 So close that my consent
 Is only asked for spirits masked
 To leap from trees and flowers.
 And this because with them I dwell
 In thought, while calmly bent
 To read the lines dear Earth designs
 Shall speak her life on ours.

V

Accept, she says; it is not hard
 In woods; but she in towns
 Repeats, accept; and have we wept,
 And have we quailed with fears,
 Or shrunk with horrors, sure reward
 We have whom knowledge crowns;
 Who see in mould the rose unfold,
 The soul through blood and tears.

NATURE AND LIFE

[1888.]

I

LEAVE the uproar: at a leap
 Thou shalt strike a woodland path,
 Enter silence, not of sleep,
 Under shadows, not of wrath;
 Breath which is the spirit's bath,
 In the old Beginnings find,
 And endow them with a mind,
 Seed for seedling, swathe for swathe.
 That gives Nature to us, this
 Give we her, and so we kiss.

II

Fruitful is it so: but hear
 How within the shell thou art,
 Music sounds; nor other near
 Can to such a tremor start.
 Of the waves our life is part;

They our running harvests bear:
 Back to them for manful air,
 Laden with the woodland's heart!
 That gives Battle to us, this
 Give we it, and good the kiss.

DIRGE IN WOODS

[1888.]

A WIND sways the pines,
 And below
 Not a breath of wild air;
 Still as the mosses that glow
 On the flooring and over the lines
 Of the roots here and there.
 The pine-tree drops its dead;
 They are quiet, as under the sea.
 Overhead, overhead
 Rushes life in a race,
 As the clouds the clouds chase;
 And we go,
 And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
 Even we,
 Even so.

MEDITATION UNDER STARS

[1888.]

WHAT links are ours with orbs that are
 So resolutely far:
 The solitary asks, and they
 Give radiance as from a shield:
 Still at the death of day,
 The seen, the unrevealed.
 Implacable they shine
 To us who would of Life obtain
 An answer for the life we strain,
 To nourish with one sign.
 Nor can imagination throw
 The penetrative shaft: we pass
 The breath of thought, who would divine
 If haply they may grow
 As Earth; have our desire to know;
 If life comes there to grain from grass,
 And flowers like ours of toil and pain;
 Has passion to beat bar,
 Win space from cleaving brain;
 The mystic link attain,
 Whereby star holds on star.

Those visible immortals beam
 Allurement to the dream:
 Ireful at human hungers brook
 No question in the look.
 For ever virgin to our sense,
 Remote they wane to gaze intense:
 Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite
 The beating heart behind the ball of sight:
 Till we conceive their heavens hoar,
 Those lights they raise but sparkles froze,
 And Earth, our blood-warm Earth, a shud-
 dering prey
 To that frigidity of brainless ray.

Yet space is given for breath of thought
Beyond our bounds when musing: more
When to that musing love is brought,
And love is asked of love's wherefore.
'T is Earth's, her gift; else have we nought:
Her gift, her secret, here our tie.
And not with her and yonder sky?
Bethink you: were it Earth alone
Breeds love, would not her region be
The sole delight and throne
Of generous Deity?

To deeper than this ball of sight
Appeal the lustrous people of the night.
Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery
sails,
It is our ravenous that quails,
Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears dis-
traught.

The spirit leaps alight,
Doubts not in them is he,
The binder of his sheaves, the same, the
right:
Of magnitude to magnitude is wrought,
To feel it large of the great life they hold:
In them to come, or vaster interwolved,
The issues known in us, our unsolved
solved:
That there with toil Life climbs the self-
same Tree,
Whose roots enrichment have from ripe-
ness dropped.

So may we read and little find them cold:
Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide
Our eyes; no branch of Reason's growing
lopped;

Nor dreaming on a dream; but fortified
By day to penetrate black midnight; see,
Hear, feel, outside the senses; even that we,
The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,
We who reflect those rays, though low our
place,

To them are lastingly allied.

So may we read, and little find them cold:
Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,
Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.
The fire is in them whereof we are born;
The music of their motion may be ours.
Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and
voiced

Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.
Of love, the grand impulsion, we behold

The love that lends her grace

Among the starry fold.

Then at new flood of customary morn,

Look at her through her showers,

Her mists, her streaming gold,

A wonder edges the familiar face:

She wears no more that robe of printed
hours;

Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than
her flowers.

COVENTRY PATMORE

[1823-1896]

SELECTIONS FROM THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

[1854-56.]

THE IMPOSSIBILITY

Lo, Love's obey'd by all. 'Tis right
That all should know what they obey,
Lest erring conscience damp delight,
And folly laugh our joys away.
Thou Primal Love, who grantest wings
And voices to the woodland birds,
Grant me the power of saying things
Too simple and too sweet for words!

LOVE'S REALITY

I WALK, I trust, with open eyes;
I've travell'd half my worldly course;
And in the way behind me lies
Much vanity and some remorse;
I've lived to feel how pride may part
Spirits, tho' match'd like hand and glove;
I've blushed for love's abode, the heart;
But have not disbelieved in love;
Nor unto love, sole mortal thing
Of worth immortal, done the wrong
To count it, with the rest that sing,
Unworthy of a serious song;
And love is my reward: for now,
When most of dead'ning time complain,
The myrtle blooms upon my brow,
Its odour quickens all my brain.

THE LOVER

HE meets, by heavenly chance express,
The destined maid; some hidden hand
Unveils to him that loveliness
Which others cannot understand.
His merits in her presence grow,
To match the promise in her eyes,
And round her happy footsteps blow
The authentic airs of Paradise.
For joy of her he cannot sleep;
Her beauty haunts him all the night;
It melts his heart, it makes him weep
For wonder, worship, and delight.
O, paradox of love, he longs,
Most humble when he most aspires,
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs
From her he honours and desires.
Her graces make him rich, and ask
No guerdon; this imperial style
Affronts him; he disdains to bask,
The pensioner of her priceless smile.

He prays for some hard thing to do,
Some work of fame and labour immense,
To stretch the languid bulk and thew
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.
No smallest boon were bought too dear,
Though barter'd for his love-sick life;
Yet trusts he, with undoubted cheer,
To vanquish heaven, and call her Wife.
He notes how queens of sweetness still
Neglect their crowns, and stoop to mate;
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,
They ask but love proportionate;
How swift pursuit by small degrees,
Love's tactic, works like miracle;
How valour, clothed in courtesies,
Brings down the haughtiest citadel;
And therefore, though he merits not
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,
Out-soars all possible desert.

LOVE A VIRTUE

STRONG passions mean weak will, and he
Who truly knows the strength and bliss
Which are in love, will own with me
No passion but a virtue 'tis.
Few hear my word; it soars above
The subtlest senses of the swarm
Of wretched things which know not love,
Their Psyche still a wingless worm.
Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow
To spirits whose vital heat is hell;
And to corrupt hearts even so
The songs I sing, the tale I tell.
These cannot see the robes of white
In which I sing of love. Alack,
But darkness shows in heavenly light,
Though whiteness, in the dark, is black!

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

Lo, WHEN the Lord made North and South
And sun and moon ordained, He,
Forthbringing each by word of mouth
In order of its dignity,
Did man from the crude clay express
By sequence, and, all else decreed,
He formed the woman; nor might less
Than Sabbath such a work succeed.
And still with favour singled out,
Marred less than man by mortal fall,
Her disposition is devout,
Her countenance angelical;

The best things that the best believe
 Are in her face so kindly writ
 The faithless, seeing her, conceive
 Not only heaven, but hope of it;
 No idle thought her instinct shrouds,
 But fancy chequers settled sense,
 Like alteration of the clouds
 On noonday's azure permanence;
 Pure dignity, composure, ease
 Declare affections nobly fix'd,
 And impulse sprung from due degrees
 Of sense and spirit sweetly mix'd.
 Her modesty, her chiefest grace,
 The cestus clasping Venus' side,
 How potent to deject the face
 Of him who would affront its pride!
 Wrong dares not in her presence speak,
 Nor spotted thought its taint disclose
 Under the protest of a cheek
 Outbragging Nature's boast the rose.
 In mind and manners how discreet;
 How artless in her very art;
 How candid in discourse; how sweet
 The concord of her lips and heart;
 How simple and how circumspect;
 How subtle and how fancy-free;
 Though sacred to her love, how deck'd
 With unexclusive courtesy;
 How quick in talk to see from far
 The way to vanquish or evade;
 How able her persuasions are
 To prove, her reasons to persuade;
 How (not to call true instinct's bent
 And woman's very nature, harm),
 How amiable and innocent
 Her pleasure in her power to charm;
 How humbly careful to attract,
 Though crown'd with all the soul de-
 sires,
 Connubial aptitude exact,
 Diversity that never tires.

THE DEAN

I

THE Ladies rose. I held the door,
 And sigh'd, as her departing grace
 Assured me that she always wore
 A heart as happy as her face;
 And, jealous of the winds that blew,
 I dreaded, o'er the tasteless wine,
 What fortune momentarily might do
 To hurt the hope that she'd be mine.

II

Towards my mark the Dean's talk set:
 He praised my 'Notes on Abury,'
 Read when the Association met
 At Sarum; he was pleased to see
 I had not stopp'd, as some men had,
 At Wrangler and Prize Poet; last,
 He hoped the business was not bad
 I came about: then the wine pass'd.

III

A full glass prefaced my reply:
 I loved his daughter, Honor; I told
 My estate and prospects; might I try
 To win her? At my words so bold
 My sick heart sank. Then he: He gave
 His glad consent, if I could get
 Her love. A dear, good Girl! she'd have
 Only three thousand pounds as yet;
 More bye and bye. Yes, his good will
 Should go with me; he would not stir;
 He and my father in old time still
 Wish'd I should some day marry her;
 But God so seldom lets us take
 Our chosen pathway, when it lies
 In steps that either mar or make
 Or alter others' destinies,
 That, though his blessing and his pray'r
 Had help'd, should help, my suit, yet he
 Left all to me, his passive share
 Consent and opportunity.
 My chance, he hoped, was good: I'd won
 Some name already; friends and place
 Appear'd within my reach, but none
 Her mind and manners would not grace.
 Girls love to see the men in whom
 They invest their vanities admired;
 Besides, where goodness is, there room
 For good to work will be desired.
 'Twas so with one now pass'd away;
 And what she was at twenty-two,
 Honor was now; and he might say
 Mine was a choice I could not rue.

IV

He ceased, and gave his hand. He had won
 (And all my heart was in my word),
 From me the affection of a son,
 Whichever fortune Heaven conferr'd!
 Well, well, would I take more wine? Then
 go

To her; she makes tea on the lawn
 These fine warm afternoons. And so
 We went whither my soul was drawn;
 And her light-hearted ignorance
 Of interest in our discourse
 Fill'd me with love, and seem'd to enhance
 Her beauty with pathetic force,
 As, through the flowery mazes sweet,
 Fronting the wind that flutter'd blythe,
 And loved her shape, and kiss'd her feet,
 Shown to their insteps proud and lithe,
 She approach'd, all mildness and young
 trust,

And ever her chaste and noble air
 Gave to love's feast its choicest gust,
 A vague, faint augury of despair.

LOVE'S IMMORTALITY

How VILELY 'twere to misdeserve
 The poet's gift of perfect speech,
 In song to try, with trembling nerve,
 The limit of its utmost reach,

Only to sound the wretched praise
 Of what tomorrow shall not be;
 So mocking with immortal bays
 The cross-bones of mortality!
 I do not thus. My faith is fast
 That all the loveliness I sing
 Is made to bear the mortal blast,
 And blossom in a better Spring.
 Doubts of eternity ne'er cross
 The Lover's mind, divinely clear:
For ever is the gain or loss
 Which maddens him with hope or fear:
 So trifles serve for his relief,
 And trifles make him sick and pale;
 And yet his pleasure and his grief
 Are both on a majestic scale.
 The chance, indefinitely small,
 Of issue infinitely great,
 Eclipses finite interests all,
 And has the dignity of fate.

LIFE OF LIFE

WHAT's that, which, ere I spake, was gone:
 So joyful and intense a spark
 That, whilst o'erhead the wonder shone,
 The day, before but dull, grew dark?
 I do not know; but this I know,
 That, had the splendour lived a year,
 The truth that I some heavenly show
 Did see, could not be now more clear.
 This know I too: might mortal breath
 Express the passion then inspired,
 Evil would die a natural death,
 And nothing transient be desired;
 And error from the soul would pass,
 And leave the senses pure and strong
 As sunbeams. But the best, alas,
 Has neither memory nor tongue!

THE REVELATION

AN idle poet, here and there,
 Looks round him; but, for all the rest,
 The world, unfathomably fair,
 Is duller than a witling's jest.
 Love wakes men, once a lifetime each;
 They lift their heavy lids, and look;
 And, lo, what one sweet page can teach,
 They read with joy, then shut the book.
 And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,
 And most forget; but, either way,
 That and the Child's unheeded dream
 Is all the light of all their day.

THE SPIRIT'S EPOCHS

Nor in the crisis of events,
 Of compass'd hopes, or fears fulfil'd,
 Or acts of gravest consequence,
 Are life's delight and depth reveal'd.
 The day of days was not the day;
 That went before, or was postponed;
 The night Death took our lamp away
 Was not the night on which we groan'd.

I drew my bride, beneath the moon,
 Across my threshold; happy hour!
 But, ah, the walk that afternoon
 We saw the water-flags in flower!

GOING TO CHURCH

(4)

THENCEFORTH, and through that pray'r, I
 trod
 A path with no suspicions dim,
 I loved her in the name of God,
 And for the ray she was of Him;
 I ought to admire much more, not less;
 Her beauty was a godly grace;
 The mystery of loveliness,
 Which made an altar of her face,
 Was not of the flesh, though that was fair,
 But a most pure and living light
 Without a name, by which the rare
 And virtuous spirit flamed to sight.
 If oft, in love, effect lack'd cause
 And cause effect, 'twere vain to soar
 Reasons to seek for that which was
 Reason itself, or something more.
 My joy was no idolatry
 Upon the ends of the vile earth bent,
 For when I loved her most then I
 Most yearn'd for more divine content.
 That other doubt, which, like a ghost,
 In the brain's darkness haunted me,
 Was thus resolved; Him loved I most,
 But her I loved most sensibly.
 Lastly, my giddiest hope allow'd
 No selfish thought, or earthly smirch;
 And forth I went, in peace, and proud
 To take my passion into Church;
 Grateful and glad to think that all
 Such doubts would seem entirely vain
 To her whose nature's lighter fall
 Made no divorce of heart from brain.

THE ABDICATION

(4)

TWICE rose, twice did my trembling word;
 The faint and frail Cathedral chimes
 Spake time in music, and we heard
 The chafers rustling in the limes.
 Her dress, that touch'd me where I stood,
 The warmth of her confided arm,
 Her bosom's gentle neighbourhood,
 Her pleasure in her power to charm;
 Her look, her love, her form, her touch,
 The least seem'd most by blissful turn,
 Blissful but that it pleased too much,
 And taught the wayward soul to yearn.
 It was as if a harp with wires
 Was traversed by the breath I drew;
 And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
 She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

LOVE'S PERVERSITY

How STRANGE a thing a lover seems
 To animals that do not love!
 Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,
 And flouts us with his Lady's glove;
 How foreign is the garb he wears;
 And how his great devotion mocks
 Our poor propriety, and scares
 The undevout with paradox?
 His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
 And great extremes of sweet and gall,
 And musing much on all that's fair,
 Grows witty and fantastical;
 He sobs his joy and sings his grief,
 And evermore finds such delight
 In simply picturing his relief,
 That 'plaining seems to cure his plight;
 He makes his sorrow, when there's none;
 His fancy blows both cold and hot;
 Next to the wish that she'll be won,
 His first hope is that she may not;
 He sues, yet deprecates consent;
 Would she be captured she must fly;
 She looks too happy and content,
 For whose least pleasure he would die.
 Oh, cruelty, she cannot care
 For one to whom she's always kind!
 He says he's nought, but, oh, despair,
 If he's not Jove to her fond mind!
 He's jealous if she pets a dove,
 She must be his with all her soul;
 Yet 'tis a postulate in love
 That part is greater than the whole;
 And all his apprehension's stress,
 When he's with her, regards her hair,
 Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,
 As if his life were only there;
 Because she's constant, he will change,
 And kindest glances coldly meet,
 And, all the time he seems so strange,
 His soul is fawning at her feet;
 Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired,
 He wickedly provokes her tears,
 And when she weeps, as he desired,
 Falls slain with ecstasies of fears;
 He blames her, though she has no fault,
 Except the folly to be his;
 He worships her, the more to exalt
 The profanation of a kiss;
 Health's his disease; he's never well
 But when his paleness shames her rose;
 His faith's a rock-built citadel,
 Its sign a flag that each way blows;
 His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes;
 And Love, in him, is fierce, like Hate,
 And ruffles his ambrosial plumes
 Against the bars of time and fate.

THE FOREIGN LAND

A WOMAN is a foreign land,
 Of which, though there he settled young,
 A man will ne'er quite understand
 The customs, politics, and tongue.

The foolish hie them post-haste through,
 See fashions odd, and prospects fair,
 Learn of the language, 'How d'y'e do,'
 And go and brag they have been there.
 The most for leave to trade apply,
 For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,
 Then get what knowledge ear and eye
 Glean chancewise in the life-long mart.
 And certain others, few and fit,
 Attach them to the Court, and see
 The Country's best, its accent hit,
 And partly sound its polity.

THE MARRIED LOVER

WHY, having won her, do I woo?
 Because her spirit's vestal grace
 Provokes me always to pursue,
 But, spirit-like, eludes embrace;
 Because her womanhood is such
 That, as on court-days subjects kiss
 The Queen's hand, yet so near a touch
 Affirms no mean familiarity,
 Nay, rather marks more fair the height
 Which can with safety so neglect
 To dread, as lower ladies might,
 That grace could meet with disrespect;
 Thus she with happy favour feeds
 Allegiance from a love so high
 That thence no false conceit proceeds
 Of difference bridged, or state put by;
 Because, although in act and word
 As lowly as a wife can be,
 Her manners, when they call me lord,
 Remind me 'tis by courtesy;
 Not with her least consent of will,
 Which would my proud affection hurt,
 But by the noble style that still
 Imputes an unattain'd desert;
 Because her gay and lofty brows,
 When all is won which hope can ask,
 Reflect a light of hopeless snows
 That bright in virgin ether bask;
 Because, though free of the outer court
 I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
 Sacred to Heaven; because, in short,
 She's not and never can be mine.

SELECTIONS FROM THE
UNKNOWN EROS

[1877.]

DEPARTURE

It was not like your great and gracious
 ways!
 Do you, that have nought other to lament,
 Never, my Love, repent
 Of how, that July afternoon,
 You went,
 With sudden, unintelligible phrase,
 And frighten'd eye,
 Upon your journey of so many days,
 Without a single kiss or a good-bye?

I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice
was weak,
Your harrowing praise.
Well, it was well, my Wife,
To hear you such things speak,
And see your love
Make of your eyes a growing gloom of life,
As a warm South-wind, sombres a March
grove.

And it was like your great and gracious
ways

To turn your talk on daily things, my
Dear,

Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash

To let the laughter flash,

Whilst I drew near,

Because you spoke so low that I could
scarcely hear.

But all at once to leave me at the last,
More at the wonder than the loss aghast,

With huddled, unintelligible phrase,

And frighten'd eye,

And go your journey of all days

With not one kiss or a good-bye,

And the only loveless look the look with
which you pass'd,

'Twas all unlike your great and gracious
ways.

THE TOYS

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful
eyes,

And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up
wise,

Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd

With hard words and unkiss'd,

His Mother, who was patient, being dead.

Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder
sleep,

I visited his bed,

But found him slumbering deep,

With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.

And I, with moan,

Kissing away his tears, left others of my
own;

For, on a table drawn beside his head,

He had put, within his reach,

A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,

A piece of glass abraded by the beach

And six or seven shells,

A bottle with bluebells

And two French copper coins, ranged there
with careful art,

To comfort his sad heart.

So when that night I pray'd

To God, I wept, and said:

Ah, when at last we lie with stanc'd
breath,

Not vexing Thee in death,

And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, 'fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the
clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

SPONSA DEI

WHAT is this Maiden fair
The laughing of whose eye
Is in man's heart renew'd virginity;
Who yet sick longing breeds
For marriage which exceeds
The inventive guess of Love to satisfy
With hope of utter binding, and of loosing
endless dear despair?

What gleams about her shine,
More transient than delight and more di-
vine!

If she does something but a little sweet,
As gaze towards the glass to set her hair,
See how his soul falls humbled at her
feet!

Her gentle step, to go or come,
Gains her more merit than a martyrdom;
And, if she dance, it doth such grace confer
As opes the heaven of heavens to more
than her,

And makes a rival of her worshipper.

To die unknown for her were little cost!

So is she without guile,

Her mere refused smile

Makes up the sum of that which may be
lost!

Who is this Fair

Whom each hath seen,

The darkest once in this bewailed dell,

Be he not destin'd for the glooms of hell?

Whom each hath seen

And known, with sharp remorse and sweet,
as Queen

And tear-glad Mistress of his hopes of
bliss,

Too fair for man to kiss?

Who is this only happy She,

Whom, by a frantic flight of courtesy,

Born of despair

Of better lodging for his Spirit fair,

He adores as Margaret, Maude, or Cecily?

And what this sigh,

That each one heaves for earth's last
lowlyhead

And the Heaven high

Ineffably lock'd in dateless bridal-bed?

Are all, then, mad, or is it prophecy?

"Sons now we are of God," as we have
heard,

"But what we shall be hath not yet ap-
pear'd."

O, Heart, remember thee
 That man is none,
 Save One.
 What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He
 Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty
 be,
 Not thou, but God; and thy sick fire
 A female vanity,
 Such as a Bride, viewing her mirror'd
 charms,
 Feels when she sighs, "All these are for his
 arms!"
 A reflex heat
 Flash'd on thy cheek from His immense
 desire,
 Which waits to crown, beyond thy brain's
 conceit,
 Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing
 sweet,
 Not bye-and-bye, but now,
 Unless deny Him thou!

THE AZALEA

THERE, where the sun shines first
 Against our room,
 She train'd the gold Azalea, whose per-
 fume
 She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace
 dispersed.
 Last night the delicate crests of saffron
 bloom,

For that their dainty likeness watch'd and
 nurst,
 Were just at point to burst.
 At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was
 dead,
 And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,
 And waked, ah, God, and did not waken
 her,
 But lay, with eyes still closed,
 Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere
 By which I knew so well that she was
 near,
 My heart to speechless thankfulness com-
 posed.
 Till 'gan to stir
 A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head—
 It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was*
 dead!
 The warm night had the lingering buds dis-
 closed;
 And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast
 A chance-found letter press'd
 In which she said,
 "So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu!
 "Parting's well-paid with soon again to
 meet,
 "Soon in your arms to feel so small and
 sweet,
 "Sweet to myself than am so sweet to
 you!"

ROBERT BRIDGES

[1844—]

FROM THE GROWTH OF LOVE

[1876. Enlarged 1889.]

VIII

FOR beauty being the best of all we know
Sums up the unsearchable and secret aims
Of nature, and on joys whose earthly names
Were never told can form and sense bestow;
And man has sped his instinct to outgo
The step of science; and against her shames
Imagination stakes out heavenly claims,
Building a tower above the head of woe.

Nor is there fairer work for beauty found
Than that she win in nature her release
From all the woes that in the world
abound:

Nay with his sorrow may his love increase,
If from man's greater need beauty redound,
And claims his tears for homage of his
peace.

XVI

This world is unto God a work of art,
Of which the unaccomplish'd heavenly plan
Is hid in life within the creature's heart,
And for perfection looketh unto man.

Ah me! those thousand ages: with what
slow

Pains and persistence were his idols made,
Destroy'd and made, ere ever he could know
The mighty mother must be so obey'd.

For lack of knowledge and thro' little
skill

His childish mimicry outwent his aim;
His effort shaped the genius of his will;
Till thro' distinction and revolt he came,
True to his simple terms of good and ill,
Seeking the face of Beauty without blame.

XX

The world still goeth about to shew and
hide,

Befool'd of all opinion, fond of fame:
But he that can do well taketh no pride,
And see'th his error, undisturb'd by shame:

So poor's the best that longest life can
do,

The most so little, diligently done;
So mighty is the beauty that doth woo,
So vast the joy that love from love hath
won.

God's love to win is easy, for He loveth
Desire's fair attitude, nor strictly weighs
The broken thing, but all alike approveth
Which love hath aim'd at Him: that is
heaven's praise:

And if we look for any praise on earth,
'Tis in man's love: all else is nothing worth.

XXIII

O weary pilgrims, chanting of your woe,
That turn your eyes to all the peaks that
shine,

Hailing in each the citadel divine
The which ye thought to have enter'd long
ago;

Until at length your feeble steps and slow
Falter upon the threshold of the shrine,
And your hearts overburden'd doubt in fine
Whether it be Jerusalem or no:

Dishearten'd pilgrims, I am one of you:
For, having worshipp'd many a barren face,
I scarce now greet the goal I journey'd to:
I stand a pagan in the holy place;
Beneath the lamp of truth I am found un-
true,

And question with the God that I embrace.

XXXV

All earthly beauty hath one cause and
proof,

To lead the pilgrim soul to beauty above:
Yet lieth the greater bliss so far aloof,
That few there be are wean'd from earthly
love.

Joy's ladder it is, reaching from home
to home,
The best of all the work that all was good;
Whereof 'twas writ the angels aye up-
clomb,
Down sped, and at the top the Lord God
stood.

But I my time abuse, my eyes by day
Center'd on thee, by night my heart on
fire—

Letting my number'd moments run away—
Nor e'en 'twixt night and day to heaven
aspire:

So true it is that what the eye seeth
not

But slow is loved, and loved is soon for-
got.

XLII

When I see childhood on the threshold
 seize
 The prize of life from age and likeli-
 hood,
 I mourn time's change that will not be
 withstood,
 Thinking how Christ said *Be like one of*
these.
 For in the forest among many trees
 Scarce one in all is found that hath made
 good
 The virgin pattern of its slender wood;
 That courtied in joy to every breeze;

But scath'd, but knotted trunks that raise
 on high
 Their arms in stiff contortion, strain'd and
 bare;
 Whose patriarchal crowns in sorrow sigh.
 So, little children, ye—nay nay, ye ne'er
 From me shall learn how sure the change
 and nigh,
 When ye shall share our strength and
 mourn to share.

LXII

I will be what God made me, nor protest
 Against the bent of genius in my time,
 That science of my friends robs all the
 best,
 While I love beauty, and was born to
 rhyme.
 Be they our mighty men, and let me
 dwell
 In shadow among the mighty shades of
 old,
 With love's forsaken palace for my cell:
 Whence I look forth and all the world
 behold,

And say, These better days, in best
 things worse,
 This bastardy of time's magnificence,
 Will mend in fashion and throw off the
 curse,
 To crown new love with higher excellence.
 Curs'd tho' I be to live my life alone,
 My toil is for man's joy, his joy my
 own.

FROM SHORTER POEMS

[1890-1894.]

ELEGY

THE wood is bare: a river-mist is steeping
 The trees that winter's chill of life
 bereaves:
 Only their stiffened boughs break silence,
 weeping
 Over their fallen leaves;

That lie upon the dank earth brown and
 rotten,
 Miry and matted in the soaking wet:
 Forgotten with the spring, that is for-
 gotten
 By them that can forget.

Yet it was here we walked when ferns
 were springing,
 And through the mossy bank shot bud
 and blade:—
 Here found in summer, when the birds
 were singing,
 A green and pleasant shade.

'Twas here we loved in sunnier days and
 greener;
 And now, in this disconsolate decay,
 I come to see her where I most have
 seen her,
 And touch the happier day.

For on this path, at every turn and corner,
 The fancy of her figure on me falls:
 Yet walks she with the slow step of a
 mourner,
 Nor hears my voice that calls.

So through my heart there winds a track
 of feeling,
 A path of memory, that is all her own:
 Whereto her phantom beauty ever stealing
 Haunts the sad spot alone.

About her steps the trunks are bare, the
 branches
 Drip heavy tears upon her downcast
 head;
 And bleed from unseen wounds that no
 sun staunches,
 For the year's sun is dead.

And dead leaves wrap the fruits that sum-
 mer planted:
 And birds that love the South have taken
 wing.
 The wanderer, loitering o'er the scene
 enchanted,
 Weeps, and despairs of spring.

POOR WITHERED ROSE AND DRY

Poor withered rose and dry,
 Skeleton of a rose,
 Risen to testify
 To love's sad close:

Treasured for love's sweet sake,
 That of joy past
 Thou might'st again awake
 Memory at last.

Yet in thy perfume sweet;
 Thy petals red
 Yet tell of summer heat,
 And the gay bed;

Yet, yet recall the glow
Of the gazing sun,
When at thy bush we two
Joined hands in one.

But, rose, thou hast not seen,
Thou hast not wept
The change that passed between,
Whilst thou hast slept.

To me thou seemest yet
The dead dream's thrall:
While I live and forget
Dream, truth and all.

Thou are more fresh than I,
Rose, sweet and red:
Salt on my pale cheeks lie
The tears I shed.

A POPPY GROWS UPON THE SHORE

A POPPY grows upon the shore,
Bursts her twin cup in summer late:
Her leaves are glaucous-green and hoar,
Her petals yellow, delicate.

Oft to her cousins turns her thought,
In wonder if they care that she
Is fed with spray for dew, and caught
By every gale that sweeps the sea.

She has no lovers like the red,
That dances with the noble corn:
Her blossoms on the waves are shed,
Where she stands shivering and forlorn.

RONDEAU

His poisoned shafts, that fresh he dips
In juice of plants that no bee sips,
He takes, and with his bow renown'd
Goes out upon his hunting ground,
Hanging his quiver at his hips.

He draws them one by one, and clips
Their heads between his finger-tips,
And looses with a twanging sound
His poisoned shafts.

But if a maiden with her lips
Suck from the wound the blood that drips,
And drink the poison from the wound,
The simple remedy is found
That of their deadly terror strips
His poisoned shafts.

TRIOLET

WHEN first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.
Who could foretell this sore distress
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met? — We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.

TRIOLET

ALL women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.
If nought seem better, nothing's worse:
All women born are so perverse.
From Adam's wife, that proved a curse
Though God had made her for a blessing.
All women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.

A PASSER-BY

WHITHER, O splendid ship, thy white sails
crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent
West,
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky cloud-
ing,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy
quest?
Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales
oppress,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is
hurling,
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or
rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails
furling.

I there before thee, in the country that well
thou knowest,
Already arrived am inhaling the odorous
air:
I watch thee enter unerringly where thou
goest,
And anchor queen of the strange ship-
ping there,
Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts
bare;
Nor is aught from the foaming reef to
the snow-capped, grandest
Peak, that is over the feathery palms
more fair
Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still
thou standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhailed and
nameless,
I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly
divine
That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage
blameless,
Thy port assured in a happier land than
mine.
But for all I have given thee, beauty
enough is thine,
As thou, aslant with trim tackle and
shrouding,
From the proud nostril curve of a prow's
line
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white
sails crowding.

DEJECTION

WHEREFORE to-night so full of care,
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare
Painful escapes of fitful life?

Shaping the doom that may befall
By precedent of terror past:
By love dishonoured, and the call
Of friendship slighted at the last?

By treasured names, the little store
That memory out of wreck could save
Of loving hearts, that gone before
Call their old comrade to the grave?

O soul, be patient: thou shalt find
A little matter mend all this;
Some strain of music to thy mind,
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow
Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste
Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow
Half sad for sweetness run to waste.

O happy life! I hear thee sing,
O rare delight of mortal stuff!
I praise my days for all they bring,
Yet are they only not enough.

I HAVE LOVED FLOWERS THAT
FADE

I HAVE loved flowers that fade,
Within those magic tents
Rich hues have marriage made
With sweet unmemoried scents:
A honeymoon delight,—
A joy of love at sight,
That ages in an hour:—
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs, that die
Before their charm is writ
Along a liquid sky
Trembling to welcome it.
Notes, that with pulse of fire
Proclaim the spirit's desire,
Then die, and are nowhere:—
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,
And wither as a bloom:
Fear not a flowery death,
Dread not an airy tomb!
Fly with delight, fly hence!
'Twas thine love's tender sense
To feast; now on thy bier
Beauty shall shed a tear.

LONDON SNOW

WHEN men were all asleep the snow came
flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city
brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and
loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy
town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs
failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and
down:
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and
railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting
and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches
seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted
lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and
frosty heaven;
And all woke earlier for the unaccus-
tomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange un-
heavenly glare:
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the daz-
zling whiteness;
The ear harkened to the stillness of the
solemn air;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot
falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and
spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to
school, calling,
They gathered up the crystal manna to
freeze

Their tongues with tasting, their hands
with snowballing;

Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to
the knees;

Or peering up from under the white-
mossed wonder,
'O look at the trees!' they cried, 'O look
at the trees!'

With lessened load a few carts creak and
blunder,

Following along the white deserted way,
A country company long dispersed asun-
der:

When now already the sun, in pale dis-
play

Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth
below

His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir
of the day.

For now doors open, and war is waged
with the snow;

And trains of sombre men, past tale of
number,
Tread along brown paths, as toward their
toil they go:
But even for them awhile no cares en-
cumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is
unspoken,
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow
slumber
At the sight of the beauty that greets them,
for the charm they have broken.

I LOVE ALL BEAUTEOUS THINGS

I LOVE all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honoured for them.

I too will something make
And joy in the making;
Altho' to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.

FROM NEW POEMS AND LATER POEMS

MY DELIGHT AND THY DELIGHT

My delight and thy delight
Walking, like two angels white,
In the gardens of the night:

My desire and thy desire
Twining to a tongue of fire,
Leaping live, and laughing higher;
Thro' the everlasting strife
In the mystery of life.

Love, from whom the world begun,
Hath the secret of the sun.

Love can tell, and love alone,
Whence the million stars were strewn,
Why each atom knows its own,
How, in spite of woe and death,
Gay is life, and sweet is breath:

This he taught us, this we knew,
Happy in his science true,
Hand in hand as we stood

Neath the shadows of the wood,
Heart to heart as we lay
In the dawning of the day.

PATER FILIO

SENSE with keenest edge unused,
Yet unsteel'd by scathing fire;
Lovely feet as yet unbruised
On the ways of dark desire;
Sweetest hope that lookest smiling
O'er the wilderness defiling!

Why such beauty, to be blighted
By the swarm of foul destruction?
Why such innocence delighted,
When sin stalks to thy seduction?
All the litanies e'er chaunted
Shall not keep thy faith undaunted.

I have pray'd the sainted Morning
To unclasp her hands to hold thee;
From resignful Eve's adorning
Stol'n a robe of peace to enfold thee;
With all charms of man's contriving
Arm'd thee for thy lonely striving.

Me too once unthinking Nature,
—Whence Love's timeless mockery took
me,—

Fashion'd so divine a creature,
Yea, and like a beast forsook me.
I forgave, but tell the measure
Of her crime in thee, my treasure.

MELANCHOLIA

THE sickness of desire, that in dark days
Looks on the imagination of despair,
Forgetteth man, and stinteth God his
praise;

Nor but in sleep findeth a cure for care.
Uncertainty that once gave scope to dream
Of laughing enterprise and glory untold,
Is now a blackness that no stars redeem,
A wall of terror in a night of cold.

Fool! that thou hast impossibly desired
And now impatiently despair'st, see
How nought is changed: Joy's wisdom is
attired

Splendid for others' eyes if not for thee:
Not love or beauty or youth from earth
is fled:

If they delight thee not, 'tis thou art dead.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

[1840-1922]

FROM THE LOVE SONNETS OF PROTEUS

[1875.]

II. COMPARING HER TO A FALCON

Brave as a falcon and as merciless,
With bright eyes watching still the world,
thy prey,
I saw thee pass in thy lone majesty,
Untamed, unmated, high above the press.
The dull crowd gazed at thee. It could
not guess

The secret of thy proud aerial way,
Or read in thy mute face the soul which lay
A prisoner there in chains of tenderness.
—Lo, thou art captured. In my hand to-day

I hold thee, and awhile thou deignest to be
Pleased with my jesses. I would fain beguile

My foolish heart to think thou lovest me.
See,

I dare not love thee quite. A little while
And thou shalt sail back heavenwards.
Woe is me!

III. ON HIS FORTUNE IN LOVING HER

I did not choose thee, dearest. It was Love
That made the choice, not I. Mine eyes
were blind

As a rude shepherd's who to some lone
grove

His offering brings, and cares not at what
shrine

He bends his knee. The gifts alone were
mine;

The rest was Love's. He took me by the
hand,

And fired the sacrifice, and poured the wine,
And spoke the words I might not under-
stand.

I was unwise in all but the dear chance
Which was my fortune, and the blind desire
Which led my foolish steps to Love's abode,
And youth's sublime unreasoned prescience
Which raised an altar and inscribed in fire
Its dedication: "To the unknown god."

IV. IN PRAISE OF HIS FATE

When I hear others speak of this and that
In our fools' lives which might have better
gone,

Complaining idly of too niggard fate
And wishing still their senseless past un-
done,

I feel a childish tremor through me run,
Stronger than reason, lest by some far
chance

Fate's ear to our sad complaints should yet
be won

And these our lives be thrown back on
our hands.

I tremble when I think of my past years,
My hopes, my aims, my wishes. All these
days

I might have wandered far from Love
and thee.

But kind fate held me, heedless of my
prayers,

A prisoner to its wise mysterious ways,
And forced me to thy feet—ah fortunate
me!

XI. ON HER LIGHTEARTEDNESS

I would I had thy courage, dear, to face
This bankruptcy of love, and greet despair
With smiling eyes and unconcerned em-
brace,

And these few words of banter at "dull
care".

I would that I could sing and comb my
hair

Like thee the morning thro', and choose my
dress,

And gravely argue what I best should wear,
A shade of ribbon or a fold of lace.

I would I had thy courage and thy peace,
Peace passing understanding; that mine
eyes

Could find forgetfulness like thine in sleep;
That all the past for me like thee could
cease

And leave me cheerfully, sublimely wise,
Like David with washed face who ceased
to weep.

XXI. HIS BONDAGE TO MANON IS BROKEN

From this day forth I lead another life,
Another life! A life without a tear!

To-day has ended the unequal strife;
My service and my sorrow finish here.

See, my soul cuts her cable of belief
And sails towards the ocean. She shall
steer

Sublime henceforth o'er accidents of grief.
I have loved too much, too loyally, too
long.

To-day I am a pirate of the sea.

Let others suffer. I have suffered wrong.
Let others love, and love as tenderly.
Oh, Manon, there are women yet unborn
Shall rue thy frailty, else am I forsworn.

XXXIII. BEMINDING HER OF A PROMISE

OH, Juliet, we have quarreled with our
fate,

And fate has struck us. Wherefore do we
cry?

We prayed for liberty, and now too late
Find liberty is this, to say "good-bye".

The Winter which we loved not has gone
by,

And Spring is come. The gardens, which
were bare

When we first wandered through them,
you and I,

The prisoners of our vain wishes, are
Now full of golden flowers. The very lane
Down to the sea is green. The cactus
hedge

We saw cut down has sprouted new again,
And swallows have their nests on the cliff's
edge

Where we so often sat and dared complain
Because our joy was new, and called it pain.

XXXIV. REMINDING HER OF A PROMISE

(Continued)

YES, Spring is come, but joy alas is gone, —
Gone ere we knew it, while our foolish
eyes,

Which should have watched its motions
every one

Were looking elsewhere, at the hills, the
skies,

Chasing vain thoughts, as children butter-
flies,

Until the hour struck and the day was
done,

And we looked up in passionate surprise
To find that clouds had blotted out our sun.
Our joys are gone. And what is left to
us,

Who loved not even love when it was
here?

What but a voice which sobs monotonous
As these sad waves upon the rocks, the
dear

Fond voice which once made music with
our own,

And which our hearts now ache to think
upon.

XXXIX. FAREWELL TO JULIET

JULIET, farewell. I would not be forgiven
Even if I forgave. These words must be
The last between us two in Earth or
Heaven,

The last and bitterest. You are hence-
forth free

For ever from my bitter words and me.
You shall not at my hand be further vexed
With either love, reproach or jealousy
(So help me Heaven), in this world or the
next.

Our souls are single for all time to come
And for eternity, and this farewell
Is as the trumpet note, the crack of doom,
Which heralds an eternal silence. Hell
Has no more fixed and absolute decree.
And Heaven and Hell may meet, — yet
never we.

XLII. THE SAME CONTINUED

We vex each other with our presence, I
By my regrets and by my mocking face,
You by your laughter and mad gaiety,
And both by cruel thoughts of happier days.
Is then the world so narrow that we pace
These streets like prisoners still with eyes
askance,

As bound together in the fell embrace
Of a dark chain which bars deliverance?
Nay, go your ways. I will not vex you
more.

Make your own terms with life, while you
are fair.

There is none better learned in woman's
lore.

You yet may take revenge on grief and
care,

And 'twas your nature ever to be gay,
Why should I scoff? Be merry while you
may.

XLIII. THE SAME CONTINUED

I do not love you. To have said this once
Had seemed to both of us a monstrous lie,
An idle boast, love's last extravagance
Or the mere paradox of vanity.

Now it is true and yet more hideously
More strangely monstrous. I, no less than
you,

Here own at length the worm which cannot
die,

The burden of a pain for ever new.

This is the " pang of loss," the bitterest
Which Hell can give. We are shut out
from Heaven

And never more shall look upon Love's
face,

Being with those who perish unforgiven.
Never to see Love's face! Ah, pain in pain,
Which we do well to weep and weep again!

LIII. THE SAME CONTINUED

FAREWELL, then. It is finished. I forgo
With this all right in you, even that of
tears.

If I have spoken hardly, it will show
How much I loved you. With you disap-
pears

A glory, a romance of many years.
What you may be henceforth I will not know.

The phantom of your presence on my fears
Is impotent at length for weal or woe.
Your past, your present, all alike must fade
In a new land of dreams where love is not.
Then kiss me and farewell. The choice is made

And we shall live to see the past forgot,
If not forgiven. See, I came to curse,
Yet stay to bless. I know not which is worse.

LV. ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

To-day, all day, I rode upon the Down,
With hounds and horsemen, a brave company.

On this side in its glory lay the sea,
On that the Sussex Weald, a sea of brown.
The wind was light, and brightly the sun shone,

And still we galloped on from gorse to gorse.

And once, when checked, a thrush sang,
and my horse

Pricked his quick ears as to a sound unknown.

I knew the Spring was come. I knew it even

Better than all by this, that through my chase

In bush and stone and hill and sea and heaven

I seemed to see and follow still your face.
Your face my quarry was. For it I rode,
My horse a thing of wings, myself a god.

LVI. TO ONE WHOM HE DARED NOT LOVE

As one who, in a desert wandering
Alone and faint beneath a pitiless sky,
And doubting in his heart if he shall bring
His bones back to his kindred or there die,
Finds at his feet a treasure suddenly
Such as would make him for all time a king,

And so forgets his fears and with keen eye
Falls to a-counting each new precious thing:

— So was I when you told me yesterday
The tale of your dear love. Awhile I stood

Astonished and enraptured, and my heart
Began to count its treasures. Now dismay
Steals back my joy, and terror chills my blood,

And I remember only "We must part."

LXI. TO ONE EXCUSING HIS POVERTY

Ah! love, impute it not to me a sin
That my poor soul thus beggared comes to thee.

My soul a pilgrim was, in search of thine,

And met these accidents by land and sea.
The world was hard, and took its usury,
Its toll for each new night in each new inn;
And every road had robber bands to fee;
And all, even kindness, must be paid in coin.

Behold my scrip is empty, my heart bare.
I give thee nothing who my all would give.
My pilgrimage is finished, and I fare
Bare to my death, unless with thee I live.
Ah! give, love, and forgive that I am poor.
Ah! take me to thy arms and ask no more.

LXIX. SIBYLLINE BOOKS

When first, a boy, at your fair knees I kneeled,

'Twas with a worthy offering. In my hand
My young life's book I held, a volume sealed,

Which none but you, I deemed, might understand.

And you I did entreat to loose the band
And read therein your own soul's destiny.
But, Tarquin-like, you turned from my demand,

Too proudly fair to find your fate in me.
When now I come, alas, what hands have turned

Those virgin pages! Some are torn away,
And some defaced, and some with passion burned,

And some besmeared with life's least holy clay.

Say, shall I offer you these pages wet
With blood and tears? And will your sorrow read

What your joy heeded not?—Unopened yet
One page remains. It still may hold a fate,
A counsel for the day of utter need.

Nay, speak, sad heart, speak quick. The hour is late.

Age threatens us. The Gaul is at the gate.

LXXI. THE TWO HIGHWAYMEN

I LONG have had a quarrel set with Time,
Because he robbed me. Every day of life
Was wrested from me after bitter strife,
I never yet could see the sun go down
But I was angry in my heart, nor hear
The leaves fall in the wind without a tear
Over the dying summer. I have known
No truce with Time nor Time's accomplice,
Death.

The fair world is the witness of a crime
Repeated every hour. For life and breath
Are sweet to all who live; and bitterly
The voices of these robbers of the heath
Sound in each ear and chill the passer by.
— What have we done to thee, thou monstrous Time?

What have we done to Death that we must die?

LXXVII. WHO WOULD LIVE AGAIN?

OH who would live again to suffer loss?
Once in my youth I battled with my fate,
Grudging my days to death. I would have
won

A place by violence beneath the sun.
I took my pleasures madly as by force,
Even the air of heaven was a prize.
I stood a plunderer at death's very gate,
And all the lands of life I did o'errun
With sack and pillage. Then I scorned to
die,

Save as a conqueror. The treasures
Of love I ransacked; pity, pride and hate.
All that can make hearts beat or brim
men's eyes

With living tears I took as robes to wear.
— But see, now time has struck me on the
hip.

I cannot hate nor love. My senses are
Struck silent with the silence of my lip.
No courage kindles in my heart to dare,
No strength to do. The world's last phan-
toms slip

Out of my grasp, and naught is left but
pain.

Love, life, vain strength! — Oh who would
live again?

XCI. LAUGHTER AND DEATH

THERE is no laughter in the natural world
Of beast or fish or bird, though no sad
doubt

Of their futurity to them unfurled
Has dared to check the mirth-compelling
shout.

The lion roars his solemn thunder out
To the sleeping woods. The eagle screams
her cry.

Even the lark must strain a serious throat
To hurl his blest defiance at the sky.
Fear, anger, jealousy have found a voice.
Love's pain or rapture the brute bosoms
swell.

Nature has symbols for her nobler joys,
Her nobler sorrows. Who had dared fore-
tell

That only man, by some sad mockery,
Should learn to laugh who learns that he
must die?

XCV. HE IS NOT A POET

I WOULD not, if I could, be called a poet.
I have no natural love of the "chaste muse."
If aught be worth the doing I would do it;
And others, if they will, may tell the news.
I care not for their laurels but would
choose

On the world's field to fight or fall or run.
My soul's ambition will not take excuse
To play the dial rather than the sun.
The faith I held I hold, as when a boy
I left my books for cricket-bat and gun.

The tales of poets are but scholars' themes.
In my hot youth I held it that a man
With heart to dare and stomach to enjoy
Had better work to his hand in any plan
Of any folly, so the thing were done,
Than in the noblest dreaming of mere
dreams.

FROM THE LOVE LYRICS OF
PROTEUS

[1875.]

SONG—LOVE ME A LITTLE

Love me a little, love me as thou wilt,
Whether a draught it be of passionate
wine
Poured with both hands divine,
Or just a cup of water spilt
On dying lips and mine.
Give me the love thou wilt,
The purity, the guilt,
So it be thine.

Love me a little. Let it be thy cheek
With its red signals. That were dear to
kiss.
Or, if thou mayest not this,
A finger-tip my own to seek
At nightfall when none guess.
Eyes have the wit to speak,
And sighs send messages:
Even give less.

Love me a little. Let it be in words
Of happy omen heralding thy choice,
Or in a veiled sad voice
Of warning, like a frightened bird's.
How should I not rejoice,
Though swords be crossed with swords
And discord mar love's chords
And tears thy voice?

Love me a little. All my world thou art.
Thy much were Heaven: thy little Earth
shall be.
If not Eternity,
Then Time be mine, the human part,
A single hour with thee.
Love as thou wilt and art,
With all or half a heart,
So thou love me.

SONG—OH FLY NOT, PLEASURE

OH fly not, Pleasure, pleasant-hearted
Pleasure.

Fold me thy wings, I prithee, yet and
stay.

For my heart no measure
Knows nor other treasure
To buy a garland for my love to-day.

And thou too, Sorrow, tender-hearted Sorrow.

Thou grey-eyed mourner, fly not yet away.

For I fain would borrow
Thy sad weeds to-morrow

To make a mourning for love's yesterday.

The voice of Pity, Time's divine dear Pity,
Moved me to tears. I dared not say
them nay,

But went forth from the city

Making thus my ditty

Of fair love lost for ever and a day.

THE STRICKEN HART

THE stricken hart had fled the brake,
His courage spent for life's dear sake.
He came to die beside the lake.

The golden trout leaped up to view,
The moorfowl clapped his wings and crew,
The swallow brushed him as she flew.

He looked upon the glorious sun,
His blood dropped slowly on the stone,
He loved the life so nearly won,

And then he died. The ravens found
A carcase couched upon the ground,
They said their god had dealt the wound.

The Eternal Father calmly shook
One page untitled from life's book.
Few words. None ever cared to look.

Yet woe for life thus idly riven.
He blindly loved what God had given,
And love, some say, has conquered Heaven.

THE BROKEN PITCHER

ACCUSED be the hour of that sad day
The careless potter put his hand to thee,
And dared to fashion out of common clay
So pure a shape as thou didst seem to me.

An idle boy, when vintage was begun,
I passed and saw thy beauty for my sin,
And poured unheeding till it was done
The red wine of my love's first gathering
in.

And thou, ah! thou didst look at me and
smile

To see me give with such ungrudging
hand,

As taking all to thy dear heart, the while
It only fell upon the thirsty sand.

Sad pitcher, thou wast broken at the well,
Ere yet the shepherd's lip had tasted
thine.

A god had lost in thee his hydromel,
As I have wasted my poor wealth of
wine.

Yet, wherefore wast thou made so fair a
thing?

Or why of clay, whose fabric rightly
were

Of finest gold, new-fashioned for a king,
And framed by some divine artificer?

I will not curse thee, thou poor shape of
clay,

That thou art other than thou seemed to
be,

Yet I will break thee, that no passer may
Unthinking break another heart on thee.

FROM ESTHER

[1892.]

L

HE who has once been happy is for aye
Out of destruction's reach. His fortune
then

Holds nothing secret, and Eternity,
Which is a mystery to other men,
Has like a woman given him its joy.

Time is his conquest. Life, if it should
fret,

Has paid him tribute. He can bear to die.
He who has once been happy! When I
set

The world before me and survey its range,
Its mean ambitions, its scant fantasies,
The shreds of pleasure which for lack of
change

Men wrap around them and call happi-
ness,

The poor delights which are the tale and
sum

Of the world's courage in its martyrdom;

LI

WHEN I hear music from a tavern door,

When I see crowds agape and in the rain
Watching on tiptoe and with stifled roar

To see a rocket fired or a bull slain,
When misers handle gold, when orators

Touch strong men's hearts with glory till
they weep,

When cities deck their streets for barren
wars

Which have laid waste their youth, and
when I keep

Calmly the count of my own life and see
On what poor stuff my manhood's dreams
were fed

Till I too learned what dole of vanity

Will serve a human soul for daily bread,
—Then I remember that I once was
young

And lived with Esther the world's gods
among.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(1850-1894)

FROM A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

[1885.]

TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

FROM HER BOY

For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake;
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land;
For all the story-books you read;
For all the pains you comforted;
For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore;
My second Mother, my first Wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read
May find as dear a nurse at need,
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,
May hear it in as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice!

R. L. S.

BED IN SUMMER

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

A THOUGHT

It is very nice to think
The world is full of meat and drink,
With little children saying grace
In every Christian kind of place.

YOUNG NIGHT THOUGHT

ALL night long and every night,
When my mama puts out the light,
I see the people marching by,
As plain as day, before my eye.

Armies and emperors and kings,
All carrying different kinds of things,
And marching in so grand a way,
You never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen
At the great circus on the green;
For every kind of beast and man
Is marching in that caravan.

At first they move a little slow,
But still the faster on they go,
And still beside them close I keep
Until we reach the Town of Sleep.

WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN

A CHILD should always say what's true
And speak when he is spoken to,
And behave mannerly at table;
At least as far as he is able.

RAIN

THE rain is raining all around,
It falls on field and tree,
It rains on the umbrellas here,
And on the ships at sea.

PIRATE STORY

THREE of us afloat in the meadow by the
swing,
Three of us aboard in the basket on the
lea.

Winds are in the air, they are blowing in
the spring,
And waves are on the meadow like the
waves there are at sea.

Where shall we adventure, to-day that
we're afloat,
Wary of the weather and steering by a
star?

Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the
boat.

To Providence, or Babylon, or off to
Malabar?

Hi! but here's a squadron a-rowing on
the sea—

Cattle on the meadow a-charging with
a roar!

Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as
mad as they can be,

The wicket is the harbour and the garden
is the shore.

FOREIGN LANDS

Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping into town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairy-land,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.

TRAVEL

I SHOULD like to rise and go
Where the golden apples grow;—
Where below another sky
Parrot islands anchored lie,
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,
Lonely Crusoes building boats;—
Where in sunshine reaching out
Eastern cities, miles about,
Are with mosque and minaret
Among sandy gardens set,
And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar;—
Where the Great Wall round China goes,
And on one side the desert blows,
And with bell and voice and drum,
Cities on the other hum;—
Where are forests, hot as fire,
Wide as England, tall as a spire,
Full of apes and cocoa-nuts
And the negro hunters' huts;—
Where the knotty crocodile
Lies and blinks in the Nile,
And the red flamingo flies
Hunting fish before his eyes;—
Where in jungles, near and far,
Man-devouring tigers are,
Lying close and giving ear,
Lest the hunt be drawing near,
Or a comer-by be seen
Swinging in a palanquin;—
Where among the desert sands
Some deserted city stands,
All its children, sweep and prince,
Grown to manhood ages since,
Not a foot in street or house,
Not a stir of child or mouse,

And when kindly falls the night,
In all the town no spark of light.
There I'll come when I'm a man
With a camel caravan;
Light a fire in the gloom
Of some dusty dining room;
See the pictures on the walls,
Heroes, fights and festivals;
And in a corner find the toys
Of the old Egyptian boys.

SINGING

OF speckled eggs the birdie sings
And nests among the trees;
The sailor sings of ropes and things
In ships upon the seas.

The children sing in far Japan,
The children sing in Spain;
The organ with the organ man
Is singing in the rain.

LOOKING FORWARD

WHEN I am grown to man's estate
I shall be very proud and great,
And tell the other girls and boys
Not to meddle with my toys.

AUNTIE'S SKIRTS

WHENEVER Auntie moves around,
Her dresses make a curious sound;
They trail behind her up the floor,
And trundle after through the door.

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

WHEN I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

THE LAND OF NOD

FROM breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the Land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the Land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

MY SHADOW

I HAVE a little shadow that goes in and
out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more
than I can see.

He is very, very like me from the heels
up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I
jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way
he likes to grow—
Not at all like proper children, which is
always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an
india-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's
none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children
ought to play,
And, can only make a fool of me in
every sort of way.
He stands so close beside me, he's a cow-
ard you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that
shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun
was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every
buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant
sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was
fast asleep in bed.

SYSTEM

EVERY night my prayers I say,
And get my dinner every day;
And every day that I've been good,
I get an orange after food.

The child that is not plain and neat,
With lots of toys and things to eat,
He is a naughty child, I'm sure—
Or else his dear papa is poor.

ESCAPE AT BEDTIME

THE lights from the parlour and kitchen
shone out
Through the blinds and the windows
and bars;
And high overhead and all moving about,
There were thousands of millions of
stars,
There ne'er were such thousands of leaves
on a tree,
Nor of people in church or the Park,
As the crowds of the stars that looked
down upon me,
And that glittered and winked in the
dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter,
and all,
And the star of the sailor, and Mars,
These shone in the sky, and the pail by
the wall
Would be half full of water and stars.
They saw me at last, and they chased me
with cries,
And they soon had me packed into bed;
But the glory kept shining and bright in
my eyes,
And the stars going round in my head.

THE COW

THE friendly cow all red and white,
I love with all my heart:
She gives me cream with all her might,
To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,
And yet she cannot stray,
All in the pleasant open air,
The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass
And wet with all the showers,
She walks among the meadow grass
And eats the meadow flowers.

HAPPY THOUGHT

THE world is so full of a number of
things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as
kings.

GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN

CHILDREN, you are very little,
And your bones are very brittle;
If you would grow great and stately,
You must try to walk sedately.

You must still be bright and quiet,
And content with simple diet;
And remain, through all bewild'ring,
Innocent and honest children.

Happy hearts and happy faces,
Happy play in grassy places—
That was how, in ancient ages,
Children grew to kings and sages.

But the unkind and the unruly,
And the sort who eat unduly,
They must never hope for glory—
Theirs is quite a different story!

Cruel children, crying babies,
All grow up as geese and gabies,
Hated, as their age increases,
By their nephews and their nieces.

FOREIGN CHILDREN

LITTLE Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
O! don't you wish that you were me?

You have seen the scarlet trees
And the lions over seas;
You have eaten ostrich eggs,
And turned the turtles off their legs.

Such a life is very fine,
But it's not so nice as mine:
You must often, as you trod,
Have wearied *not* to be abroad.

You have curious things to eat,
I am fed on proper meat;
You must dwell beyond the foam,
But I am safe and live at home.
Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
O! don't you wish that you were me?

THE SUN'S TRAVELS

THE sun is not a-bed, when I
At night upon my pillow lie;
Still round the earth his way he takes,
And morning after morning makes.

While here at home, in shining day,
We round the sunny garden play,
Each little Indian sleepy-head
Is being kissed and put to bed.

And when at eve I rise from tea,
Day dawns beyond the Atlantic Sea;
And all the children in the West
Are getting up and being dressed.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has
left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie
going by;

For every night at teatime and before you
take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes
posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria
go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as
he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose
what I'm to do,
O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light
the lamps with you!

For we are very lucky, with a lamp be-
fore the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights
so many more;
And O! before you hurry by with ladder
and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him
to-night!

THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown—
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

FROM A RAILWAY CARRIAGE

FASTER than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle,
All through the meadows the horses and
cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and
scrambles,—
All by himself and gathering brambles;
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
And there is the green for stringing the
daisies!

Here is a cart run away in the road
Lumping along with man and load;
And here is a mill and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone for ever!

THE UNSEEN PLAYMATE

WHEN children are playing alone on the green,
In comes the playmate that never was seen.
When children are happy and lonely and good,
The Friend of the Children comes out of the wood.

Nobody heard him and nobody saw,
His is a picture you never could draw,
But he's sure to be present, abroad or at home,
When children are happy and playing alone.

He lies in the laurels, he runs on the grass,
He sings when you tinkle the musical glass;
Whene'er you are happy and cannot tell why,
The Friend of the Children is sure to be by!

He loves to be little, he hates to be big,
'Tis he that inhabits the caves that you dig;
'Tis he when you play with your soldiers of tin
That sides with the Frenchmen and never can win.

'Tis he, when at night you go off to your bed,
Bids you go to your sleep and not trouble your head;
For wherever they're lying, in cupboard or shelf,
'Tis he will take care of your playthings himself!

MY KINGDOM

Down by a shining water well
I found a very little dell,
No higher than my head.
The heather and the gorse about
In summer bloom were coming out,
Some yellow and some red.

I called the little pool a sea;
The little hills were big to me;
For I am very small.

I made a boat, I made a town,
I searched the caverns up and down,
And named them one and all.

And all about was mine, I said,
The little sparrows overhead,
The little minnows too.
This was the world and I was king;
For me the bees came by to sing,
For me the swallows flew.

I played there were no deeper seas,
Nor any wider plains than these,
Nor other kings than me.
At last I heard my mother call
Out from the house at evenfall,
To call me home to tea.

And I must rise and leave my dell,
And leave my dimpled water well,
And leave my heather blooms.
Alas! and as my home I neared,
How very big my nurse appeared,
How great and cool the rooms!

THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS

At evening when the lamp is lit,
Around the fire my parents sit;
They sit at home and talk and sing,
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl
All in the dark along the wall,
And follow round the forest track
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,
These are my starry solitudes;
And there the river by whose brink
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away
As if in firelit camp they lay,
And I, like to an Indian scout,
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,
Home I return across the sea,
And go to bed with backward looks
At my dear Land of Story-books.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

(1849-1903)

FROM IN HOSPITAL

[Composed 1873-75. — Published 1888.]

ENTER PATIENT

THE morning mists still haunt the stony street;
The northern summer air is shrill and cold;
And lo, the Hospital, grey, quiet, old,
Where Life and Death like friendly chaffers meet.
Thro' the loud spaciousness and draughty gloom
A small, strange child — so agèd yet so young! —
Her little arm besplinted and beslung,
Precedes me gravely to the waiting-room.
I limp behind, my confidence all gone.
The grey-haired soldier-porter waves me on,
And on I crawl, and still my spirits fail:
A tragic meanness seems so to environ
These corridors and stairs of stone and iron,
Cold, naked, clean — half-workhouse and half-jail.

WAITING

A SQUARE, squat room (a cellar on promotion),
Drab to the soul, drab to the very daylight;
Plasters astray in unnatural-looking tin-ware;
Scissors and lint and apothecary's jars.
Here, on a bench a skeleton would writhe from,
Angry and sore, I wait to be admitted:
Wait till my heart is lead upon my stomach,
While at their ease two dressers do their chores.
One has a probe — it feels to me a crow-bar.
A small boy sniffs and shudders after bluestone.
A poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers.
Life is (I think) a blunder and a shame.

OPERATION

You are carried in a basket,
Like a carcase from the shambles,
To the theatre, a cockpit
Where they stretch you on a table.

Then they bid you close your eyelids,
And they mask you with a napkin,
And the anaesthetic reaches
Hot and subtle through your being.

And you gasp and reel and shudder
In a rushing, swaying rapture,
While the voices at your elbow
Fade — receding — fainter — farther.

Lights about you shower and tumble,
And your blood seems crystallising —
Edged and vibrant, yet within you
Racked and hurried back and forward.

Then the lights grow fast and furious,
And you hear a noise of waters,
And you wrestle, blind and dizzy,
In an agony of effort,

Till a sudden lull accepts you,
And you sound an utter darkness . . .
And awaken . . . with a struggle . . .
On a hushed, attentive audience.

STAFF NURSE: NEW STYLE

BLUE-EYED and bright of face but waning fast

Into the sere of virginal decay,
I view her as she enters, day by day,
As a sweet sunset almost overpast.
Kindly and calm, patrician to the last,
Superbly falls her gown of sober gray,
And on her chignon's elegant array
The plainest cap is somehow touched with caste.

She talks BEETHOVEN; frowns disapprobation
At BALZAC's name, sighs it at 'poor
GEORGE SAND's';
Knows that she has exceeding pretty hands;
Speaks Latin with a right accentuation;
And gives at need (as one who understands)

Draught, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation.

CASUALTY

As WITH varnish red and glistening
Dripped his hair; his feet looked rigid;
Raised, he settled stiffly sideways;
You could see his hurts were spinal.

He had fallen from an engine,
And been dragged along the metals.
It was hopeless, and they knew it;
So they covered him, and left him.

As he lay, by fits half sentient,
Inarticulately moaning,
With his stockinged soles protruded
Stark and awkward from the blankets,

To his bed there came a woman,
Stood and looked and sighed a little,
And departed without speaking,
As himself a few hours after.

I was told it was his sweetheart.
They were on the eve of marriage.
She was quiet as a statue,
But her lip was grey and writhen.

HOUSE-SURGEON

EXCEEDINGLY tall, but built so well his
height
Half-disappears in flow of chest and limb;
Moustache and whisker trooper-like in
trim;
Frank-faced, frank-eyed, frank-hearted;
always bright
And always punctual — morning, noon, and
night;
Bland as a Jesuit, sober as a hymn;
Humorous, and yet without a touch of
whim;
Gentle and amiable, yet full of fight.
His pety, though fresh and true in strain.
Has not yet whitewashed up his common
mood
To the dead blank of his particular
Schism.
Sweet, unaggressive, tolerant, most hu-
mane,
Wild artists like his kindly elderhood,
And cultivate his mild Philistinism.

APPARITION¹

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeak-
ably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his
face —
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and
touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the
sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity —
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on
trace
Of passion and impudence and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

[¹ Robert Louis Stevenson.]

DISCHARGED

CARRY me out
Into the wind and the sunshine,
Into the beautiful world.

O, the wonder, the spell of the streets!
The stature and strength of the horses,
The rustle and echo of footfalls,
The flat roar and rattle of wheels!
A swift tram floats huge on us . . .
It's a dream?
The smell of the mud in my nostrils
Blows brave — like a breath of the sea!

As of old,
Ambulant, undulant drapery,
Vaguely and strangely provocative,
Flutters and beckons. O, yonder —
Is it? — the gleam of a stocking!
Sudden, a spire
Wedged in the mist! O, the houses,
The long lines of lofty, grey houses,
Cross-hatched with shadow and light!
These are the streets . . .
Each is an avenue leading
Whither I will!

Free . . . !
Dizzy, hysterical, faint,
I sit, and the carriage rolls on with me
Into the wonderful world.

BALLADE OF DEAD ACTORS

[1888.]

WHERE are the passions they essayed,
And where the tears they made to flow?
Where the wild humours they portrayed
For laughing worlds to see and know?
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe?
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall?
And Millamant and Romeo?
Into the night go one and all.

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed?
The plumes, the armours — friend and foe?
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade,
The mantles glittering to and fro?
The pomp, the pride, the royal show?
The cries of war and festival?
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow?
Into the night go one and all.

The curtain falls, the play is played:
The Beggar packs beside the Beau;
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid;
The Thunder huddles with the Snow.
Where are the revellers high and low?
The clashing swords? The lover's call?
The dancers gleaming row on row?
Into the night go one and all.

ENVOY

Prince, in one common overthrow
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall:
As dust that drives, as straws that blow,
Into the night go one and all.

DOUBLE BALLADE OF LIFE AND
FATE

[1888.]

Fools may pine, and sots may swill,
Cynics gibe and prophets rail,
Moralists may scourge and drill,
Preachers prose, and fainthearts quail.
Let them whine, or threat, or wail!
Till the touch of Circumstance
Down to darkness sink the scale,
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

What if skies be wan and chill?
What if winds be harsh and stale?
Presently the east will thrill,
And the sad and shrunken sail,
Belling with a kindly gale,
Bear you sunwards, while your chance
Sends you back the hopeful hail:—
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Idle-shot or coming bill
Hapless love or broken bail,
Gulp it (never chew your pill!),
And, if Burgundy should fail,
Try the humbler pot of ale!
Over all is heaven's expanse,
Gold's to find among the shale.
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

Dull Sir Joskin sleeps his fill,
Good Sir Galahad seeks the Grail,
Proud Sir Pertinax flaunts his frill,
Hard Sir Aeger dints his mail;
And the while by hill and dale
Tristram's braveries gleam and glance,
And his blithe horn tells its tale:—
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Araminta's grand and shrill,
Delia's passionate and frail,
Doris drives an earnest quill,
Athanasia takes the veil:
Wiser Phyllis o'er her pail,
At the heart of all romance
Reading, sings to Strephon's flail:—
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Every Jack must have his Jill
(Even Johnson had his Thrale!):
Forward, couples—with a will!
This, the world, is not a jail.
Hear the music, sprat and whale!
Hands across, retire, advance!
Though the doomsman's on your trail,
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

ENVOY

Boys and girls, at slug and snail
And their kindred look askance.
Pay your footing on the nail:
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

[1888.]

When you are old, and I am passed away—
Passed, and your face, your golden face,
is gray—
I think, whate'er the end, this dream of
mine,
Comforting you, a friendly star will shine
Down the dim slope where still you stumble
and stray.

So may it be: that so dead Yesterday,
No sad-eyed ghost but generous and gay,
May serve you memories like almighty wine,
When you are old!

Dear Heart, it shall be so. Under the
sway
Of death the past's enormous disarray
Lies hushed and dark. Yet though there
come no sign,
Live on well pleased: immortal and divine
Love shall still tend you, as God's angels
may,
When you are old.

WHAT IS TO COME

[1888.]

What is to come we know not. But we
know
That what has been was good—was good
to show,
Better to hide, and best of all to bear.
We are the masters of the days that were:
We have lived, we have loved, we have
suffered . . . even so.

Shall we not take the ebb who had the
flow?
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our
foe—
Dear, though it spoil and break us!—
need we care

What is to come?

Let the great winds their worst and wildest
blow,
Or the gold weather round us mellow
slow:
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can
dare
And we can conquer, though we may not
share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow
What is to come.

OUT OF THE NIGHT THAT COVERS ME

[Composed 1875. — Published 1888.]

OUT of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

THE SANDS ARE ALIVE WITH SUNSHINE

[Composed 1875. — Published 1888.]

THE sands are alive with sunshine,
The bathers lounge and throng,
And out in the bay a bugle
Is lilting a gallant song.

The clouds go racing eastward,
The blithe wind cannot rest,
And a shard on the shingle flashes
Like the shining soul of a jest;

While children romp in the surges,
And sweethearts wander free,
And the Firth as with laughter dimples . . .
I would it were deep over me!

A CHILD

[Composed 1876. — Published 1888.]

A child,
Curious and innocent,
Slips from his Nurse, and rejoicing
Loses himself in the Fair.

Thro' the jostle and din
Wandering, he revels,
Dreaming, desiring, possessing;
Till, of a sudden
Tired and afraid, he beholds
The sordid assemblage
Just as it is; and he runs
With a sob to his Nurse
(Lighting at last on him),
And in her motherly bosom
Cries him to sleep.

Thus thro' the World,
Seeing and feeling and knowing,
Goes Man: till at last,
Tired of experience, he turns
To the friendly and comforting breast
Of the old nurse, Death.

THE WAYS ARE GREEN

[Composed 1878. — Published 1888.]

THE ways are green with the gladdening
sheen

Of the young year's fairest daughter.
O, the shadows that fleet o'er the springing
wheat!

O, the magic of running water!
The spirit of spring is in every thing,
The banners of spring are streaming,
We march to a tune from the fifes of
June,
And life's a dream worth dreaming.

It's all very well to sit and spell
At the lesson there's no gainsaying;
But what the deuce are wont and use
When the whole mad world's a-maying?
When the meadow glows, and the orchard
snows,
And the air's with love-motes teeming,
When fancies break, and the senses wake,
O, life's a dream worth dreaming!

What Nature has writ with her lusty wit
Is worded so wisely and kindly
That whoever has dipped in her manu-
script
Must up and follow her blindly.
Now the summer prime is her blithest
rhyme
In the being and the seeming,
And they that have heard the overword
Know life's a dream worth dreaming.

LIFE IN HER CREAKING SHOES

[Composed 1878. — Published 1888.]

LIFE in her creaking shoes
Goes, and more formal grows,
A round of calls and cues:
Love blows as the wind blows.
Blows! . . . in the quiet close
As in the roaring mart,
By ways no mortal knows
Love blows into the heart.

The stars some cadence use,
Forthright the river flows,
In order fall the dews,
Love blows as the wind blows:
Blows! . . . and what reckoning shows
The courses of his chart?
A spirit that comes and goes,
Love blows into the heart.

A LATE LARK TWITTERS FROM
THE QUIET SKIES

[Composed 1876. — Published 1886.]

A LATE lark twitters from the quiet skies;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, grey city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The
sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing
night —
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day
done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

OR EVER THE KNIGHTLY YEARS
WERE GONE

[1888.]

OR ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,
I bent and broke your pride.
You loved me well, or I heard them lie,
But your longing was denied.
Surely I knew that by and by
You cursed your gods and died.

And a myriad suns have set and shone
Since then upon the grave
Decreed by the King of Babylon
To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,
For it tramples me again.
The old resentment lasts like death,
For you love, yet you refrain.
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone
The deed beyond the grave,
When I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Virgin Slave.

CROSSES AND TROUBLES

[1888.]

CROSSES and troubles a-many have proved
me.
One or two women (God bless them!)
have loved me.
I have worked and dreamed, and I've
talked at will.
Of art and drink I have had my fill.
I've comforted here, and I've succoured
there.
I've faced my foes, and I've backed my
friends.
I've blundered, and sometimes made
amends.
I have prayed for light, and I've known
despair.
Now I look before, as I look behind,
Come storm, come shine, whatever befall,
With a grateful heart and a constant mind,
For the end I know is the best of all.

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

[Composed 1890-92. — Published 1892.]

NO. I. *Grave*

ST. MARGARET'S bells,
Quiring their innocent, old-world canticles,
Sing in the storied air,
All rosy-and-golden, as with memories
Of woods at evensong, and sands and seas
Disconsolate for that the night is nigh.
O, the low, lingering lights! The large last
gleam
(Hark! how those brazen choristers cry
and call!)

Touching these solemn ancients, and
there,
The silent River ranging tide-mark high
And the callow, grey-faced Hospital,
With the strange glimmer and glamour of
a dream!

The Sabbath peace is in the slumbrous
trees,
And from the wistful, the fast-widowing
sky
(Hark! how those plangent comforters
call and cry!)

Falls as in August plots late roseleaves
fall.
The sober Sabbath stir —
Leisurely voices, desultory feet! —
Comes from the dry, dust-coloured street,
Where in their summer frocks the girls go
by,
And sweethearts lean and loiter and confer,
Just as they did an hundred years ago,
Just as an hundred years to come they
will: —

When you and I, Dear Love, lie lost and
 low,
 And sweet-throats none our welkin shall
 fulfil,
 Nor any sunset fade serene and slow;
 But, being dead, we shall not grieve to
 die.

NO. II. *Andante con moto*

FORTH from the dust and din,
 The crush, the heat, the many-spotted
 glare,
 The odour and sense of life and lust
 aflare,
 The wrangle and jangle of unrests,
 Let us take horse, Dear Heart, take horse
 and win—
 As from swart August to the green lap
 of May—
 To quietness and the fresh and fragrant
 breasts
 Of the still, delicious night, not yet aware
 In any of her innumerable nests
 Of that first sudden splash of dawn,
 Clear, sapphirine, luminous, large,
 Which tells that soon the flowing springs
 of day
 In deep and ever deeper eddies drawn
 Forward and up, in wider and wider way,
 Shall float the sands, and brim the shores,
 On this our lith of the World, as round
 it roars
 And spins into the outlook of the Sun
 (The Lord's first gift, the Lord's especial
 charge),
 With light, with living light, from marge
 to marge
 Until the course He set and staked be
 run.

Through street and square, through square
 and street,
 Each with his home-grown quality of dark
 And violated silence, loud and fleet,
 Waylaid by a merry ghost at every lamp.
 The hansom wheels and plunges. Hark, O,
 hark,
 Sweet, how the old mare's bit and chain
 Ring back a rough refrain
 Upon the marked and cheerful tramo
 Of her four shoes! Here is the Park,
 And O, the languid midsummer waits
 adust,
 The tired midsummer blooms!
 O, the mysterious distances, the glooms
 Romantic, the august
 And solemn shapes! At night this City of
 Trees
 Turns to a tryst of vague and strange
 And monstrous Majesties,
 Let loose from some dim underworld to
 range
 These terrene vistas till their twilight sets:

When, dispossessed of wonderfulness, they
 stand
 Beggared and common, plain to all the
 land
 For stooks of leaves! And lo! the Wizard
 Hour,
 His silent, shining sorcery winged with
 power!
 Still, still the streets, between their car-
 canets
 Of linking gold, are avenues of sleep.
 But see how gable ends and parapets
 In gradual beauty and significance
 Emerge! And did you hear
 That little twitter-and-cheep,
 Breaking inordinately loud and clear
 On this still, spectral, exquisite atmosphere?
 'Tis a first nest at matins! And behold
 A rakehell cat—how furtive and acold!
 A spent witch homing from some infamous
 dance—
 Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and
 fade
 Through shadowy railings into a pit of
 shade!
 And now! a little wind and shy,
 The smell of ships (that earnest of ro-
 mance),
 A sense of space and water, and thereby
 A lamplit bridge touching the troubled
 sky,
 And look, O, look! a tangle of silver
 gleams
 And dusky lights, our River and all his
 dreams,
 His dreams that never save in our deaths
 can die.

What miracle is happening in the air,
 Charging the very texture of the gray
 With something luminous and rare?
 The night goes out like an ill-parcelled
 fire,
 And, as one lights a candle, it is day.
 The extinguisher, that perks it like a spire
 On the little formal church, is not yet
 green
 Across the water: but the house-tops
 nigher,
 The corner-lines, the chimneys—look how
 clean,
 How new, how naked! See the batch of
 boats,
 Here at the stairs, washed in the fresh-
 sprung beam!
 And those are barges that were goblin
 floats,
 Black, hag-steered, fraught with devilry and
 dream!
 And in the piles the water frolics clear,
 The ripples into loose rings wander and
 flee,
 And we—we can behold that could but
 hear

The ancient River singing as he goes,
New-mailed in morning, to the ancient
Sea.

The gas burns lank and jaded in its glass:
The old Ruffian soon shall yawn himself
awake,

And light his pipe, and shoulder his tools,
and take

His hobnailed way to work!

Let us too pass —

Pass ere the sun leaps and your shadow
shows —

Through these long, blindfold rows
Of casements staring blind to right and
left,

Each with his gaze turned inward on some
piece

Of life in death's own likeness — Life
bereft

Of living looks as by the Great Release —
Pass to an exquisite night's more ex-
quisite close!

Reach upon reach of burial — so they feel,
These colonies of dreams! And as we
steal

Homeward together, but for the buxom
breeze,

Fitfully frolicking to heel

With news of dawn-drenched woods and
tumbling seas,

We might — thus awed, thus lonely that
we are —

Be wandering some dispeopled star,
Some world of memories and unbroken
graves,

So broods the abounding Silence near and
far:

Till even your footfall craves
Forgiveness of the majesty it braves.

NO. III. *Scherzando*

Down through the ancient Strand
The spirit of October, mild and boon

And sauntering, takes his way

This golden end of afternoon,
As though the corn stood yellow in all the
land,

And the ripe apples dropped to the harvest-
moon.

Lo! the round sun, half-down the western
slope —

Seen as along an unglazed telescope —

Lingers and lolls, loth to be done with
day:

Gifting the long, lean, lanky street
And its abounding confluences of being

With aspects generous and bland;

Making a thousand harnesses to shine

As with new ore from some enchanted
mine,

And every horse's coat so full of sheen
He looks new-tailored, and every 'bus feels
clean,

And never a hansom but is worth the
feeing;

And every jeweller within the pale
Offers a real Arabian Night for sale;

And even the roar

Of the strong streams of toil, that pause
and pour

Eastward and westward, sounds suffused —
Seems as it were bemused

And blurred, and like the speech

Of lazy seas on a lotus-haunted beach —

With this enchanted lustrousness,

This mellow magic, that (as a man's caress
Brings back to some faded face, beloved
before,

A heavenly shadow of the grace it wore
Ere the poor eyes were minded to beseech)

Old things transfigures, and you hail and
bless

Their looks of long-lapsed loveliness once
more:

Till Clement's, angular and cold and staid,
Gleams forth in glamour's very stuffs
arrayed;

And Bride's, her æry, unsubstantial charm
Through flight on flight of springing, soar-
ing stone

Grown flushed and warm,

Laughs into life full-mooded and fresh-
blown;

And the high majesty of Paul's

Uplifts a voice of living light, and calls —
Calls to his millions to behold and see

How goodly this his London Town can
be!

For earth and sky and air

Are golden everywhere,

And golden with a gold so suave and fine
The looking on it lifts the heart like wine.

Trafalgar Square

(The fountains volleying golden glaze)

Shines like an angel-market. High aloft

Over his couchant Lions, in a haze

Shimmering and bland and soft,

A dust of chrysoprase,

Our Sailor takes the golden gaze

Of the saluting sun, and flames superb,

As once he flamed it on his ocean round.

The dingy deariness of the picture-place,

Turned very nearly bright,

Takes on a luminous transiency of grace,

And shows no more a scandal to the
ground.

The very blind man pottering on the kerb

Among the posies and the ostrich feathers

And the rude voices touched with all the
weathers

Of the long, varying year,

Shares in the universal alms of light.

The windows, with their fleeting, flickering
fires,
The height and spread of frontage shining
sheer,
The quiring signs, the rejoicing roofs and
spires —
'Tis El Dorado — El Dorado plain,
The Golden City! And when a girl goes
by,
Look! as she turns her glancing head,
A call of gold is floated from her ear!
Golden, all golden! In a golden glory,
Long-lapsing down a golden coasted sky,
The day not dies, but seems
Dispersed in wafts and drifts of gold, and
shed
Upon a past of golden song and story
And memories of gold and golden dreams.

NO. IV. *Largo e mesto*

Out of the poisonous East,
Over a continent of blight,
Like a maleficent Influence released
From the most squalid cellarage of hell,
The Wind-Fiend, the abominable —
The Hangman Wind that tortures temper
and light —
Comes slouching, sullen and obscene,
Hard on the skirts of the embittered
night;
And in a cloud unclean
Of excremental humours, roused to strife
By the operation of some ruinous change,
Wherever his evil mandate run and range,
Into a dire intensity of life,
A craftsman at his bench, he settles down
To the grim job of throttling London
Town.

So, by a jealous lightlessness beset
That might have oppressed the dragons of
old time
Crunching and groping in the abysmal
slime,
A cave of cut-throat thoughts and villain-
ous dreams,
Hag-rid and crying with cold and dirt and
wet,
The afflicted City, prone from mark to
mark
In shameful occultation, seems
A nightmare labyrinthine, dim and drift-
ing,
With wavering gulfs and antic heights,
and shifting,
Rent in the stuff of a material dark,
Wherein the lamplight, scattered and sick
and pale,
Shows like the leper's living blotch of
bale:
Uncoiling monstrous into street on street
Paven with perils, teeming with mischance,
Where man and beast go blindfold and in
dread,

Working with oaths and threats and fal-
tering feet
Somewhither in the hideousness ahead;
Working through wicked airs and deadly
dews
That make the laden robber grin askance
At the good places in his black romance,
And the poor, loitering harlot rather
choose
Go pinched and pined to bed
Than lurk and shiver and curse her
wretched way
From arch to arch, scouting some three-
penny prey.

Forgot his dawns and far-flushed after-
glows,
His green garlands and windy eyots forgot,
The old Father-River flows,
His watchfires cores of menace in the
gloom,
As he came oozing from the Pit, and bore,
Sunk in his filthily transfigured sides,
Shoals of dishonoured dead to tumble and
rot
In the squalor of the universal shore:
His voices sounding through the gruesome
air
As from the Ferry where the Boat of
Doom
With her blaspheming cargo reels and
rides:
The while his children, the brave ships,
No more adventurous and fair,
Nor tripping it light of heel as home-
bound brides,
But infamously enchanted,
Huddle together in the foul eclipse,
Or feel their course by inches desperately,
As through a tangle of alleys murder-
haunted,
From sinister reach to reach out — out —
to sea.

And Death the while —
Death with his well-worn, lean, professional
smile,
Death in his threadbare working trim —
Comes to your bedside, unannounced and
bland,
And with expert, inevitable hand
Feels at your windpipe, fingers you in the
lung,
Or flicks the clot well into the labouring
heart:
Thus signifying unto old and young,
However hard of mouth or wild of whim,
'Tis time — 'tis time by his ancient watch —
to part
From books and women and talk and
drink and art.
And you go humbly after him

To a mean suburban lodging: on the way
To what or where
Not Death, who is old and very wise, can
say:

And you — how should you care
So long as, unreclaimed of hell,
The Wind-Fiend, the insufferable,
Thus vicious and thus patient, sits him
down
To the black job of burking London
Town?

NO. V. *Allegro maestoso*

SPRING winds that blow
As over leagues of myrtle-blooms and may;
Bevies of spring clouds trooping slow,
Like matrons heavy bosomed and aglow
With the mild and placid pride of increase!

Nay,
What makes this insolent and comely
stream

Of appetite, this freshet of desire
(Milk from the wild breasts of the wilful
Day!),

Down Piccadilly dance and murmur and
gleam

In genial wave on wave and gyre on gyre?
Why does that nymph unparalleled splash
and churn

The wealth of her enchanted urn
Till, over-billowing all between
Her cheerful margents, grey and living
green,

It floats and wanders, glittering and fleeing,
An estuary of the joy of being?

Why should the lovely leafage of the Park
Touch to an ecstasy the act of seeing?

— Sure, sure my paramour, my Bride of
Brides,

Lingering and flushed, mysteriously abides
In some dim, eye-proof angle of odorous
dark,

Some smiling nook of green-and-golden
shade,

In the divine conviction robed and crowned
The globe fulfils his immemorial round
But as the marrying-place of all things
made!

There is no man, this deifying day,
But feels the primal blessing in his blood.
There is no woman but disdains —
The sacred impulse of the May
Brightening like sex made sunshine through
her veins —

To vail the ensigns of her womanhood,
None but, rejoicing, flaunts them as she
goes,

Bounteous in looks of her delicious best,
On her inviolable quest:

These with their hopes, with their sweet
secrets those,

But all desirable and frankly fair,
As each were keeping some most prosper-
ous tryst,

And in the knowledge went imparadised!
For look! a magical influence everywhere,
Look how the liberal and transfiguring air
Washes this inn of memorable meetings,
This centre of ravishments and gracious
greetings,

Till, through its jocund loveliness of
length

A tidal-race of lust from shore to shore,
A brimming reach of beauty met with
strength,

It shines and sounds like some miracu-
lous dream,

Some vision multitudinous and agileam,
Of happiness as it shall be evermore!

Praise God for giving
Through this His messenger among the
days

His word the life He gave is thrice-worth
living!

For Pan, the bountiful, imperious Pan —
Not dead, not dead, as impotent dreamers
feigned,

But the gay genius of a million Mays
Renewing his beneficent endeavour! —
Still reigns and triumphs, as he hath tri-
umphed and reigned

Since in the dim blue dawn of time
The universal ebb-and-flow began,
To sound his ancient music, and prevails,
By the persuasion of his mighty rhyme,
Here in this radiant and immortal street
Lavishly and omnipotently as ever

In the open hills, the undissembling dales,
The laughing-places of the juvenile earth.
For lo! the wills of man and woman meet,
Meet and are moved, each unto each en-
deared,

As once in Eden's prodigal bowers befell,
To share his shameless, elemental mirth
In one great act of faith: while deep and
strong,

Incomparably nerved and cheered,
The enormous heart of London joys to
beat

To the measures of his rough, majestic
song;

The lewd, perennial, overmastering spell
That keeps the rolling universe ensphered,
And life, and all for which life lives to
long,

Wanton and wondrous and for ever well.

UNDER A STAGNANT SKY

(To James McNeill Whistler)

[1892.]

UNDER a stagnant sky,
Gloom out of gloom uncoiling into gloom,
The River, jaded and forlorn,
Welters and wanders wearily — wretchedly
— on;
Yet in and out among the ribs

Of the old skeleton bridge, as in the
piles
Of some dead lake-built city, full of
skulls,
Worm-worn, rat-riddled, mouldy with mem-
ories,
Lingers to babble to a broken tune
(Once, O, the unvoiced music of my
heart!)

So melancholy a soliloquy
It sounds as it might tell
The secret of the unending grief-in-grain,
The terror of Time and Change and Death,
That wastes this floating, transitory world.

What of the incantation
That forced the huddled shapes on yonder
shore
To take and wear the night
Like a material majesty?
That touched the shafts of wavering fire
About this miserable welter and wash—
(River, O River of Journeys, River of
Dreams!)

Into long, shining signals from the panes
Of an enchanted pleasure-house,
Where life and life might live life lost in
life
For ever and evermore?

O Death! O Change! O Time!
Without you, O, the insufferable eyes
Of these poor Might-Have-Beens,
These fatuous, ineffectual Yesterdays!

FRESH FROM HIS FASTNESSES

[1892.]

FRESH from his fastnesses
Wholesome and spacious,
The North Wind, the mad huntsman,
Halloas on his white hounds
Over the grey, roaring
Reaches and ridges,
The forest of ocean,
The chace of the world.
Hark to the peal
Of the pack in full cry,
As he thongs them before him,
Swarming voluminous,
Weltering, wide-wallowing,
Till in a ruining
Chaos of energy,
Hurled on their quarry,
They crash into foam!

Old Indefatigable,
Time's right-hand man, the sea
Laughs as in joy
From his millions of wrinkles:
Laughs that his destiny,

Great with the greatness
Of triumphing order,
Shows as a dwarf
By the strength of his heart
And the might of his hands.

Master of masters,
O maker of heroes,
Thunder the brave,
Irresistible message:—
'Life is worth Living
Through every grain of it,
From the foundations
To the last edge
Of the cornerstone, death.'

SPACE AND DREAD AND THE DARK

[1892.]

SPACE and dread and the dark—
Over a livid stretch of sky
Cloud-monsters crawling, like a funeral
train
Of huge, primeval presences
Stooping beneath the weight
Of some enormous, rudimentary grief;
While in the haunting loneliness
The far sea waits and wanders with a
sound
As of the trailing skirts of Destiny,
Passing unseen
To some immitigable end
With her grey henchman, Death.

What larve, what spectre is this
Thrilling the wilderness to life
As with the bodily shape of Fear?
What but a desperate sense,
A strong foreboding of those dim
Interminable continents, forlorn
And many-silenced, in a dusk
Inviolable utterly, and dead
As the poor dead it huddles and swarms
and styes

In hugger-mugger through eternity?

Life—life—let there be life!
Better a thousand times the roaring hours
When wave and wind,
Like the Arch-Murderer in flight
From the Avenger at his heel,
Storms through the desolate fastnesses
And wild waste places of the world!

Life—give me life until the end,
That at the very top of being,
The battle-spirit shouting in my blood,
Out of the reddest hell of the fight
I may be snatched and flung
Into the everlasting lull,
The immortal, incommunicable dream.

AUSTIN DOBSON

(1840-1921)

A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL

[1877.]

He lived in that past Georgian day,
When men were less inclined to say
That "Time is Gold," and overlay

With toil their pleasure;
He held some land, and dwelt thereon, —
Where, I forget, — the house is gone;
His Christian name, I think, was John, —
His surname, Leisure.

Reynolds has painted him, — a face
Filled with a fine, old-fashioned grace,
Fresh-coloured, frank, with ne'er a trace
Of trouble shaded;

The eyes are blue, the hair is drest
In plainest way, — one hand is prest
Deep in a flapped canary vest,
With buds brocaded.

He wears a brown old Brunswick coat,
With silver buttons, — round his throat,
A soft cravat; — in all you note
An elder fashion, —
A strangeness, which, to us who shine
In shapely hats, — whose coats combine
All harmonies of hue and line, —
Inspires compassion.

He lived so long ago, you see!
Men were untravelled then, but we,
Like Ariel, post o'er land and sea
With careless parting;
He found it quite enough for him
To smoke his pipe in "garden trim,"
And watch, about the fish tank's brim,
The swallows darting.

He liked the well-wheel's creaking tongue, —
He liked the thrush that fed her young, —
He liked the drone of flies among
His netted peaches;
He liked to watch the sunlight fall
Athwart his ivied orchard wall;
Or pause to catch the cuckoo's call
Beyond the beeches.

His were the times of Paint and Patch,
And yet no Ranelagh could match
The sober doves that round his thatch
Spread tails and sidled;
He liked their ruffling, puffed content, —
For him their drowsy wheelings meant
More than a Mall of Beaux that bent,
Or Belles that bridled.

Not that, in truth, when life began,
He shunned the flutter of the fan;
He too had maybe "pinked his man"
In Beauty's quarrel;
But now his "fervent youth" had flown
Where lost things go; and he was grown
As staid and slow-paced as his own
Old hunter, Sorrel.

Yet still he loved the chase, and held
That no composer's score excelled
The merry horn, when Sweetlip swelled
Its jovial riot;
But most his measured words of praise
Caressed the angler's easy ways, —
His idly meditative days, —
His rustic diet.

Not that his "meditating" rose
Beyond a sunny summer doze;
He never troubled his repose
With fruitless prying;
But held, as law for high and low,
What God withholds no man can know,
And smiled away inquiry so,
Without replying.

We read — alas, how much we read! —
The jumbled strifes of creed and creed
With endless controversies feed
Our groaning tables;
His books — and they sufficed him — were
Cotton's "Montaigne," "The Grave" of
Blair,
A "Walton" — much the worse for wear —
And "Æsop's Fables."

One more, — "The Bible." Not that he
Had searched its page as deep as we;
No sophistries could make him see
Its slender credit;
It may be that he could not count
The sires and sons to Jesse's fount, —
He liked the "Sermon on the Mount," —
And more, he read it.

Once he had loved, but failed to wed,
A red-cheeked lass who long was dead;
His ways were far too slow, he said,
To quite forget her;
And still when time had turned him gray
The earliest hawthorn buds in May
Would find his lingering feet astray,
Where first he met her.

"*In Cælo Quies*" heads the stone
 On Leisure's grave,—now little known,
 A tangle of wild-rose has grown
 So thick across it;
 The "Benefactions" still declare
 He left the clerk an elbow-chair,
 And "12 Pence Yearly to Prepare
 A Christmas Posset."

Lie softly, Leisure! Doubtless you
 With too serene a conscience drew
 Your easy breath, and slumbered through
 The gravest issue;
 But we, to whom our age allows
 Scarce space to wipe our weary brows,
 Look down upon your narrow house,
 Old friend, and miss you!

THE BALLAD A-LA-MODE

[1877.]

"Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre."

SCENE—*A Boudoir Louis-Quinze, painted
 with Cupids shooting at Butterflies.*

THE COUNTESS. The Baron (*her cousin
 and suitor*)

THE COUNTESS (*looking up from her
 work*)
 Baron, you doze.

THE BARON (*closing his book*)

I, Madame? No.
 I wait your order—Stay or Go.

THE COUNTESS

Which means, I think, that Go or Stay
 Affects you nothing, either way.

THE BARON

Excuse me,—by your favour graced,
 My inclinations are effaced.

THE COUNTESS

Or much the same. How keen you grow!
 You must be reading MARIVAUX.

THE BARON

Nay,—'twas a song of SAINTE-AULAIRE.

THE COUNTESS

Then read me one. We've time to spare;
 If I can catch the clock-face there,
 'Tis barely eight.

THE BARON

What shall it be,—
 A tale of woe, or perfidy?

THE COUNTESS

Not woes, I beg. I doubt your woes:
 But perfidy, of course, one knows.

THE BARON (*reads*)

"Ah, Phillis! cruel Phillis!
 (I heard a Shepherd say.)
 You hold me with your Eyes, and yet
 You bid me—Go my way!"

"Ah, Colin! foolish Colin!
 (The Maiden answered so.)
 If that be All, the Ill is small,
 I close them—You may go!"

"But when her Eyes she opened,
 (Although the Sun it shone,)
 She found the Shepherd had not stirred—
 'Because the Light was gone!'"

"Ah, Cupid! wanton Cupid!
 'Twas ever thus your Way;
 When Maids would bid you ply your
 Wings,
 You find Excuse to stay!"

THE COUNTESS

Famous! He earned whate'er he got:—
 But there's some sequel, is there not?

THE BARON (*turning the page*)

I think not.—No. Unless 'tis this:
 My fate is far more hard than his;—
 In fact, your Eyes—

THE COUNTESS

Now, that's a breach!
 Your bond is—not to make a speech.
 And we must start—so call JUSTINE.
 I know exactly what you mean!—
 Give me your arm—

THE BARON

If, in return,
 Countess, I could your hand but earn!

THE COUNTESS

I thought as much. This comes, you see,
 Of sentiment, and Arcady,
 Where vows are hung on every tree. . . .

THE BARON (*offering his arm, with a low
 bow*)

And no one dreams—of PERFDY.

"GOOD-NIGHT, BABETTE!"

[1877.]

"Si vieillisse pouvait!—"

SCENE—*A small neat Room. In a high
 Voltaire Chair sits a white-haired
 old Gentleman.*

MONSIEUR VIEUXBOIS.

BABETTE.

M. VIEUXBOIS (*turning querulously*)
 Day of my life! Where can she get?
 BABETTE! I say! BABETTE!—BABETTE!

BABETTE (*entering hurriedly*)

Coming, M'sieu'! If M'sieu' speaks
So loud, he won't be well for weeks!

M. VIEUXBOIS

Where have you been?

BABETTE

Why, M'sieu' knows:—

April! . . . Ville d'Avray! . . . Ma'am'-
selle Rose!

M. VIEUXBOIS

Ah! I am old,—and I forget.
Was the place growing green, BABETTE?

BABETTE

But of a greenness!—yes, M'sieu'!
And then the sky so blue!—so blue!
And when I dropped my *immortelle*,
How the birds sang!

(*Lifting her apron to her eyes*)

This poor Ma'am'selle!

M. VIEUXBOIS

You're a good girl, BABETTE, but she,—
She was an Angel, verily.
Sometimes I think I see her yet
Stand smiling by the cabinet;
And once, I know, she peeped and laughed
Betwixt the curtains . . .

Where's the draught?

(*She gives him a cup*)

Now I shall sleep, I think, BABETTE;—
Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

BABETTE (*sings*)

"Once at the *Angelus*
(*Ere I was dead*),
Angels all glorious
Came to my Bed;
Angels in blue and white
Crowned on the Head."

M. VIEUXBOIS (*drowsily*)

"She was an Angel" . . . "Once she
laughed"

What, was I dreaming?

Where's the draught?

BABETTE (*showing the empty cup*)

The draught, M'sieu'?

M. VIEUXBOIS

How I forget!

I am so old! But sing, BABETTE!

BABETTE (*sings*)

"One was the Friend I left
Stark in the Snow;
One was the Wife that died
Long—long ago;
One was the Love I lost . . .
How could she know?"

M. VIEUXBOIS (*murmuring*)

Ah, PAUL! . . . old PAUL! . . . EULALIE
too!

And ROSE . . . And O! "the sky so blue!"

BABETTE (*sings*)

"One had my Mother's eyes,
Wistful and mild;
One had my Father's face;
One was a Child:
All of them bent to me,—
Bent down and smiled!"

(He is asleep!)

M. VIEUXBOIS (*almost inaudibly*)

"How I forget!"
"I am so old!" . . . "Good night,
BABETTE!"

TU QUOQUE

An Idyll in the Conservatory

[1873.]

Ou ne romprons-nous pas?"
—LE DÉPIT AMOUREUX.

NELLIE

If I were you, when ladies at the play, sir,
Beckon and nod, a melodrama through,
I would not turn abstractedly away, sir,
If I were you!

FRANK

If I were you, when persons I affected,
Wait for three hours to take me down to
Kew,
I would, at least, pretend I recollected,
If I were you!

NELLIE

If I were you, when ladies are so lavish,
Sir, as to keep me every waltz but two,
I would not dance with *odious* Miss
M'Tavish
If I were you!

FRANK

If I were you, who vow you cannot suffer
Whiff of the best,—the mildest "honey-
dew,"
I would not dance with smoke-consuming
Puffer,
If I were you!

NELLIE

If I were you, I would not, sir, be bitter,
Even to write the "Cynical Review";—

FRANK

No, I should doubtless find flirtation fitter,
If I were you!

NELLIE

Really! You would? Why, Frank, you're
quite delightful,—
Hot as Othello, and as black of hue;
Borrow my fan. I would not look so
frightful,
If I were you!

FRANK

"It is the cause." I mean your chaperon
is
Bringing some well-curled juvenile.
Adieu!
I shall retire. I'd spare that poor Adonis,
If I were you!

NELLIE

Go, if you will. At once! And by ex-
press, sir!
Where shall it be? To China—or Peru?
Go. I should leave inquirers my address,
sir,
If I were you!

FRANK

No,—I remain. To stay and fight a duel
Seems, on the whole, the proper thing
to do;—
Ah, you are strong,—I would not then be
cruel,
If I were you!

NELLIE

One does not like one's feelings to be
doubted,—

FRANK

One does not like one's friends to mis-
construe,—

NELLIE

If I confess that I a wee-bit pouted?

FRANK

I should admit that I was *piqué*, too.

NELLIE

Ask me to dance! I'd say no more about it
If I were you!

[Waltz — *Exeunt*]

A DIALOGUE FROM PLATO

[1873.]

"Le temps le mieux employé est celui qu'on
perd." — CLAUDE TILLIER.

I'd "read" three hours. Both notes and
text

Were fast a mist becoming;
In bounced a vagrant bee, perplexed,
And filled the room with humming,

Then out. The casement's leafage sways,
And, parted light, discloses
Miss Di., with hat and book,—a maze
Of muslin mixed with roses.

"You're reading Greek?" "I am—and
you?"

"O, mine's a mere romancer!"
"So Plato is." "Then read him—do;
And I'll read mine in answer."

I read. "My Plato (Plato, too,—
That wisdom thus should harden!)
Declares 'blue eyes look doubly blue
Beneath a Dolly Varden.'"

She smiled. "My book in turn avers
(No author's name is stated)
That sometimes those Philosophers
Are sadly mis-translated."

"But hear,—the next's in stronger style:
The Cynic School asserted
That two red lips which part and smile
May not be controverted!"

She smiled once more—"My book, I find,
Observes some modern doctors
Would make the Cynics out a kind
Of album-verse concoctors."

Then I—"Why not? 'Ephesian law,
No less than time's tradition,
Enjoined fair speech on all who saw
Diana's apparition.'"

She blushed—this time. "If Plato's page
No wiser precept teaches,
Then I'd renounce that doubtful sage,
And walk to Burnham-beeches."

"Agreed," I said. "For Socrates
(I find he too is talking)
Thinks Learning can't remain at ease
While Beauty goes a-walking."

She read no more. I leapt the sill:
The sequel's scarce essential—
Nay, more than this, I hold it still
Profoundly confidential.

THE LOVE-LETTER

[1873.]

"J'ai vu les mœurs de mon temps, et j'ai publié
cette lettre." — LA NOUVELLE HÉLOÏSE.

If this should fail, why then I scarcely
know

What could succeed. Here's brilliancy
(and banter),

Byron *ad lib.*, a chapter of Rousseau;—
If this should fail, then *tempora mutan-*
tur;

Style's out of date, and love, as a pro-
fession,
Acquires no aid from beauty of expression.

"The men who think as I, I fear, are few,"
(Cynics would say 'twere well if they
were fewer);

"I am not what I seem,"—(indeed, 'tis
true;

Though, as a sentiment, it might be
newer);

"Mine is a soul whose deeper feelings lie
More deep than words"—(as these ex-
emplify).

"I will not say when first your beauty's sun
Illumed my life,"—(it needs imagina-
tion);

"For me to see you and to love were
one,"—

(This will account for some precipita-
tion);

"Let it suffice that worship more devoted
Ne'er throbb'd," *et cætera*. The rest is
quoted.

"If Love can look with all-prophetic eye,"—
(Ah, if he could, how many would be
single!)

"If truly spirit unto spirit cry,"—
(The ears of some most terribly must
tingle!)

"Then I have dreamed you will not turn
your face,"

This next, I think, is more than common-
place.

"Why should we speak, if Love, interpret-
ing,

Foretell the speech with favour found
before?

Why should we plead?—it were an idle
thing,

If Love himself be Love's ambassador!"

Blot, as I live! Shall we erase it? No;—

'Twill show we write *currente calamo*.

"My fate,—my fortune, I commit to
you,"—

(In point of fact, the latter's not ex-
tensive);

"Without you I am poor indeed,"—(strike
through,

'Tis true but crude—'twould make her
apprehensive);

"My life is yours—I lay it at your feet,"
(Having no choice but Hymen or the
Fleet).

"Give me the right to stand within the
shrine,

Where never yet my faltering feet in-
truded;

Give me the right to call you wholly
mine,"—

(That is, Consols and Three-per-Cents
included);

"To guard your rest from every care that
cankers,—
To keep your life,—(and balance at your
banker's).

"Compel me not to long for your reply;
Suspense makes havoc with the mind—
(and muscles);

"Winged Hope takes flight,"—(which
means that I must fly,

Default of funds, to Paris or to Brus-
sels);

"I cannot wait! My own, my queen—
Priscilla!

Write by return." And now for a Ma-
nilla!

"Miss Blank," at "Blank." Jemima, let it
go;

And I, meanwhile, will idle with "Sir
Walter";

Stay, let me keep the first rough copy,
though—

'Twill serve again. There's but the name
to alter;

And Love,—that starves,—must knock at
every portal,

In forma pauperis. We are but mortal!

TO "LYDIA LANGUISH"

[1873.]

"Il me faut des émotions."—BLANCHE AMORY.

You ask me, Lydia, "whether I,
If you refuse my suit, shall die."

(Now pray don't let this hurt you!)

Although the time be out of joint,
I should not think a bodkin's point

The sole resource of virtue;

Nor shall I, though your mood endure
Attempt a final Water-cure

Except against my wishes;

For I respectfully decline

To dignify the Serpentine,

And make *hors-d'oeuvres* for fishes;

But if you ask me whether I

Composedly can go,

Without a look, without a sigh,

Why, then I answer—No.

"You are assured," you sadly say
(If in this most considerate way

To treat my suit your will is),

That I shall "quickly find as fair

Some new Neera's tangled hair—

Some easier Amaryllis."

I cannot promise to be cold

If smiles are kind as yours of old

On lips of later beauties;

Nor can I, if I would, forget

The homage that is Nature's debt,

While man has social duties;

But if you ask shall I prefer
To you I honour so,
A somewhat visionary Her,
I answer truly — No.

You fear, you frankly add, "to find
In me too late the altered mind
That altering Time estranges."

To this I make response that we
(As physiologists agree)
Must have septennial changes;
This is a thing beyond control,
And it were best upon the whole
To try and find out whether
We could not, by some means, arrange
This not-to-be-avoided change
So as to change together;
But, had you asked me to allow
That you could ever grow
Less amiable than you are now, —
Emphatically — No.

But — to be serious — if you care
To know how I shall really bear
This much discussed rejection,
I answer you. As feeling men
Behave, in best romances, when
You outrage their affection; —
With that gesticulatory woe,
By which, as melodramas show,
Despair is indicated;
Enforced by all the liquid grief
Which hugest pocket-handkerchief
Has ever simulated;
And when, arrived so far, you say
In tragic accents "Go,"
Then, Lydia, then . . . I still shall stay,
And firmly answer — No.

TO AN INTRUSIVE BUTTERFLY

[1885.]

*"Kill not — for Pity's sake — and lest ye slay
The meanest thing upon its upward way,"*
— Five Rules of Buddha.

I WATCH you through the garden walks,
I watch you float between
The avenues of dahlia stalks,
And flicker on the green;
You hover round the garden seat,
You mount, you waver. Why, —
Why storm us in our still retreat,
O saffron Butterfly!

Across the room in loops of flight
I watch you wayward go;
Dance down a shaft of glancing light,
Review my books a-row;
Before the bust you flaunt and flit
Of "blind Mæonides" —
Ah, trifle, on his lips there lit
Not butterflies, but bees!

You pause, you poise, you circle up
Among my old Japan;
You find a comrade on a cup,
A friend upon a fan;
You wind anon, a breathing-while,
Around Amanda's brow; —
Dost dream her then, O Volatile!
E'en such an one as thou?

Away! Her thoughts are not as thine.
A sterner purpose fills
Her steadfast soul with deep design
Of baby bows and frills;
What care hath she for worlds without,
What heed for yellow sun,
Whose endless hopes revolve about
A planet, *à la* One.

Away! Tempt not the best of wives;
Let not thy garish wing
Come fluttering our Autumn lives
With truant dreams of Spring!
Away! Reseek thy "Flowery Land";
Be Buddha's law obeyed;
Lest Betty's undiscerning hand
Should slay . . . a future Praed!

TO A MISSAL OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

[1885.]

MISSAL of the Gothic age,
Missal with the blazoned page,
Whence, O Missal, hither come,
From what dim scriptorium?

Whose the name that wrought thee thus,
Ambrose or Theophilus,
Bending, through the waning light,
O'er thy vellum scraped and white;

Weaving 'twixt thy rubric lines
Sprays and leaves and quaint designs;
Setting round thy border scrolled
Buds of purple and of gold?

Ah! — a wondering brotherhood,
Doubtless, by that artist stood,
Raising o'er his careful ways
Little choruses of praise;

Glad when his deft hand would paint
Strife of Sathanas and Saint,
Or in secret coign entwist
Jest of cloister humourist.

Well the worker earned his wage,
Bending o'er the blazoned page!
Tired the hand and tired the wit
Ere the final *Explicit*!

Not as ours the books of old —
Things that steam can stamp and fold,
Not as ours the books of yore —
Rows of type, and nothing more.

Then a book was still a Book,
Where a wistful man might look,
Finding something through the whole,
Beating,—like a human soul.

In that growth of day by day,
When to labour was to pray,
Surely something vital passed
To the patient page at last;

Something that one still perceives
Vaguely present in the leaves;
Something from the worker lent;
Something mute—but eloquent!

A DIALOGUE

TO THE MEMORY OF MR. ALEXANDER POPE
[1888.]

"*Non injussa cano.*"—VIRG.

POET. I sing of POPE—

FRIEND. What, POPE, the *Twitnam* Bard,
Whom *Dennis*, *Cibber*, *Tibbald* push'd so
hard!

Pope of the *Dunciad*! POPE who dar'd to
woo,

And then to libel, *Wortley-Montagu*!

POPE of the *Ham-walks* story—

P. Scandals all!

Scandals that now I care not to recall.
Surely a little, in two hundred Years,
One may neglect Contemporary Sneers:—
Surely allowance for the Man may make
That had all *Grub Street* yelping in his
Wake!

And who (I ask you) has been never
Mean,

When urged by Envy, Anger or the Spleen?
No: I prefer to look on POPE as one
Not rightly happy till his Life was done;
Whose whole Career, romance it as you
please,

Was (what he call'd it) but a "long Dis-
ease":

Think of his Lot,—his Pilgrimage of Pain,
His "crazy Carcass" and his restless Brain;
Think of his Night-Hours with their Feet
of Lead,

His dreary Vigil and his aching Head;
Think of all this, and marvel then to find
The "crooked Body with a crooked Mind!"
Nay rather, marvel that, in Fate's Despite,
You find so much to solace and delight,—
So much of Courage, and of Purpose high
In that unequal Struggle *not* to die.

I grant you freely that POPE played his
Part

Sometimes ignobly—but he lov'd his Art;
I grant you freely that he sought his Ends
Not always wisely—but he lov'd his
Friends;

And who of Friends a nobler Roll could
show—

Swift, *St. John*, *Bathurst*, *Marchmont*,
Peterb'ro',
Arbuthnot—

FR. ATTICUS?

P. Well (*entre nous*),
Most that he said of *Addison* was true.
Plain Truth you know—

FR. Is often not polite
(So *Hamlet* thought)—

P. And *Hamlet* (Sir) was right.
But leave *Pope's* Life. To-day, methinks,
we touch

The Work too little and the Man too
much.

Take up the *Lock*, the *Satires*, *Eloise*—
What Art supreme, what Elegance, what
Ease!

How keen the Irony, the Wit how bright,
The Style how rapid, and the Verse how
light!

Then read once more, and you shall wonder
yet

At Skill, at Turn, at Point, at Epithet.

"True Wit is Nature to Advantage
dress'd"—

Was ever Thought so pithily express'd?

"And ten low Words oft creep in one
dull Line"—

Ah, what a Homily on Yours . . . and
Mine!

Or take—to choose at Random—take but
This—

"Ten censure wrong for one that writes
amiss."

FR. Pack'd and precise, no Doubt. Yet
surely those

Are but the Qualities we ask of Prose.

Was he a POET?

P. Yes: if that be what
Byron was certainly and *Bowles* was not;
Or say you grant him, to come nearer Date,
What *Dryden* had, that was denied to
Tate—

FR. Which means, you claim for him
the Spark divine,
Yet scarce would place him on the highest
Line—

P. True, there are Classes. POPE was
most of all

Akin to *Horace*, *Persius*, *Juvenal*;

POPE was, like them, the Censor of his Age,
An Age more suited to Repose than Rage;
When Rhyming turn'd from Freedom to
the Schools,

And shock'd with Licence, shudder'd into
Rules;

When *Phæbus* touch'd the Poet's trembling
 Ear
 With one supreme Commandment, *Be thou
 Clear*;
 When Thought meant less to reason than
 compile,
 And the *Muse* labour'd . . . chiefly with
 the File.
 Beneath full Wigs no Lyric drew its
 Breath
 As in the Days of great ELIZABETH;
 And to the Bards of ANNA was denied
 The Note that *Wordsworth* heard on *Dud-
 don*-side.
 But Pope took up his Parable, and knit
 The Woof of Wisdom with the Warp of
 Wit;
 He trimm'd the Measure on its equal Feet,
 And Smooth'd and fitted till the Line was
 neat;
 He taught the Pause with due Effect to
 fall;
 He taught the Epigram to come at Call;
 He wrote—

FR. His *Iliad*!

P. Well, suppose you own
 You like your *Iliad* in the Prose of *Bohn*,—
 Tho' if you'd learn in Prose how *Homer*
 sang,
 'Twere best to learn of *Butcher* and of
Lang,—
 Suppose you say your Worst of POPE, de-
 clare
 His Jewels Paste, his Nature a Parterre,
 His Art but Artifice—I ask once more
 Where have you seen such Artifice before?
 Where have you seen a Parterre better
 grac'd,
 Or Gems that glitter like his Gems of
 Paste?
 Where can you show, among your Names
 of Note,
 So much to copy and so much to quote?
 And where, in Fine, in all our English
 Verse,
 A Style more trenchant and a Sense more
 terse?
 So I, that love the old *Augustan* Days
 Of formal Courtesies and formal Phrase;
 That like along the finished Line to feel
 The Ruffle's Flutter and the Flash of
 Steel;
 That like my Couplet as compact as clear;
 That like my Satire sparkling tho' severe,
 Unmix'd with Bathos and unmarr'd by
 Trope,
 I fling my Cap for Polish—and for POPE!

A POSTSCRIPT TO "RETALIATION"

[1897.]

[After the Fourth Edition of Dr. GOLDSMITH'S
 RETALIATION was printed, the Publisher received
 a supplementary Epitaph on the Wit and Punster
 CALDER WHITEFOORD. Though it is found ap-
 pended to the later issue of the Poem, it has been
 suspected that WHITEFOORD wrote it himself. It
 may be that the following which has recently come
 to light is another forgery.]

HERE JOHNSON is laid. Have a care how
 you walk;
 If he stir in his sleep, in his sleep he will
 talk.
 Ye gods! how he talk'd! What a torrent
 of sound,
 His hearers invaded, encompass'd and—
 drown'd!
 What a banquet of memory, fact, illustra-
 tion,
 In that innings-for-one that he call'd *con-
 versation*!
 Can't you hear his sonorous "Why no,
 Sir!" and "Stay, Sir!
 Your premiss is wrong," or "You don't
 see your way, Sir!"
 How he silenc'd a prig, or a slipshod
 romancer!
 How he pounc'd on a fool with a knock-
 me-down answer!

But peace to his slumbers! Tho' rough in
 the rind,
 The heart of the giant was gentle and
 kind;
 What signifies now, if in bouts with a
 friend,
 When his pistol miss'd fire, he would use
 the butt-end?
 If he trampled your flow'rs, like a bull in
 a garden,
 What matter for that? he was sure to ask
 pardon;
 And you felt on the whole, tho' he'd toss'd
 you and gor'd you,
 It was something, at least, that he had not
 ignor'd you.
 Yes! the outside was rugged. But test him
 within,
 You found he had nought of the bear
 but the skin;
 And for bottom and base to his *anfractu-
 osity*,
 A fund of fine feeling, good taste, gen-
 erosity.
 He was true to his conscience, his King,
 and his duty;
 And he hated the *Whigs*, and he soften'd to
 Beauty.

Turn now to his Writings. I grant, in
 his tales,
 That he made little fishes talk vastly like
 whales;

I grant that his language was rather emphatic,
 Nay, even—to put the thing plainly—dogmatic;
 But read him for Style,—and dismiss from your thoughts,
 The crowd of compilers who copied his faults,—
 Say, where is there English so full and so clear,
 So weighty, so dignified, manly, sincere?
 So strong in expression, conviction, persuasion?
 So prompt to take colour from place and occasion?
 So widely remov'd from the doubtful, the tentative;
 So truly—and in the best sense—argumentative?
 You may talk of your BURKES and your GIBBONS so clever,
 But I hark back to him with a "JOHNSON forever!"
 And I feel as I muse on his ponderous figure,
 Tho' he's great in this age, in the next he'll grow bigger;
 And still while . . . (*Cætera Desunt*.)

THE WATER-CURE

A Tale: In the Manner of Prior

[1885.]

"—*portentaque Thessala rides?*"—HOR.

"—*Thessalian portents do you flout?*"—

CARDENIO's fortunes ne'er miscarried
 Until the day CARDENIO married.
 What then? the Nymph no doubt was young?
 She was: but yet—she had a tongue!
 Most women have, you seem to say.
 I grant it—in a different way.

'Twas not that organ half-divine,
 With which, Dear Friend, your spouse or mine,
 What time we seek our nightly pillows,
 Rebukes our easy peccadilloes:
 'Twas not so tuneful, so composing;
 'Twas louder and less often dozing;
 At *Ombre*, *Basset*, *Loo*, *Quadrille*,
 You heard it resonant and shrill;
 You heard it rising, rising yet
 Beyond SELINDA's parroquet;
 You heard it rival and outdo
 The chair-men and the link-boy too;
 In short, wherever lungs perform,
 Like MARLBOROUGH, it rode the storm.

So uncontrolled it came to be
 CARDENIO feared his *chère amie*
 (Like ECHO by *Cephius* shore)
 Would turn to voice and nothing more.

That ('tis conceded) must be cured
 Which can't by practice be endured.
 CARDENIO, though he loved the maid,
 Grew daily more and more afraid;
 And since advice could not prevail
 (Reproof but seemed to fan the gale),
 A prudent man, he cast about
 To find some fitting nostrum out.
 What need to say that priceless drug
 Had not in any mine been dug?
 What need to say no skilful leech
 Could check that plethora of speech?
 Suffice it, that one lucky day
 CARDENIO tried—another way.

A Hermit (there were hermits then;
 The most accessible of men!)
 Near *Vauxhall's* sacred shade resided;
 In him, at length, our friend confided.
 (Simple, for show, he used to sell;
 But cast *Nativities* as well.)
 Consulted, he looked wondrous wise;
 Then undertook the enterprise.

What that might be, the Muse must spare:
 To tell the truth, she was not there.
 She scorns to patch what she ignores
 With *Similes* and *Metaphors*;
 And so, in short, to change the scene,
 She slips a fortnight in between.

Behold our pair then (quite by chance!)
 In *Vauxhall's* garden of romance,—
 That paradise of nymphs and grottoes,
 Of fans, and fiddles, and ridottoes!
 What wonder if, the lamps reviewed,
 The song encored, the maze pursued,
 No further feat could seem more pat
 Than seek the Hermit after that?
 Who then more keen her fate to see
 Than this, the new LEUCONOE,
 On fire to learn the lore forbidden
 In Babylonian numbers hidden?
 Forthwith they took the darkling road
 To ALBUMAZAR his abode.

Arriving, they beheld the sage
 Intent on hieroglyphic page,
 In high *Armenian* cap arrayed,
 And girt with engines of his trade;
 (As *Skeletons*, and *Spheres*, and *Cubes*;
 As *Amulets* and *Optic Tubes*;)
 With dusky depths behind revealing
 Strange shapes that dangled from the ceiling;
 While more to palsy the beholder
 A Black Cat sat upon his shoulder.

The Hermit eyed the Lady o'er
 As one whose face he'd seen before;
 And then, with agitated looks,
 He fell to fumbling at his books.

CARDENIO felt his spouse was frightened,
 Her grasp upon his arm had tightened;

Judge then her horror and her dread
When "Vox Stellarum" shook his head;
Then darkly spake in phrase forlorn
Of *Taurus* and of *Capricorn*;
Of stars averse, and stars ascendant,
And stars entirely independent;
In fact, it seemed that all the Heavens
Were set at sixes and at sevens,
Portending, in her case, some fate
Too fearful to prognosticate.

Meanwhile the Dame was well-nigh dead.
"But is there naught," CARDENIO said,
"No sign or token, Sage, to show
From whence, or what, this dismal woe?"

The Sage, with circle and with plane,
Betook him to his charts again.
"It vaguely seems to threaten Speech:
No more (he said) the signs can teach."

But still CARDENIO tried once more:
"Is there no potion in your store,
No charm by *Chaldee* mage concerted
By which this doom can be averted?"

The Sage, with motion doubly mystic,
Resumed his juggling cabalistic.
The aspects here again were various;
But seemed to indicate *Aquarius*.
Thereat portentously he frowned;
Then frowned again, then smiled;—'twas
found;

But 'twas too simple to be tried.
"What is it, then?" at once they cried.

"Whene'er by chance you feel incited
To speak at length, or uninvited;
Whene'er you feel your tones grow shrill
(At times, we know, the softest will!),
This word oracular, my Daughter,
Bids you to fill your mouth with water;
Further, to hold it firm and fast,
Until the danger be o'erpast."

The Dame, by this in part relieved,
The prospect of escape perceived,
Rebelled a little at the diet.
CARDENIO said discreetly, "Try it,
Try it, my Own. You have no choice,
What if you lose your charming voice!"
She tried, it seems. And whether then
Some god stepped in, benign to men;
Or Modesty, too long outlawed,
Contrived to aid the pious fraud,
I know not:—but from that same day
She talked in quite a different way.

ROSE-LEAVES

[1874.]

Sans peser. — Sans rester."

A KISS

ROSE kissed me to-day.
Will she kiss me to-morrow?
Let it be as it may,
Rose kissed me to-day

But the pleasure gives way
To a savour of sorrow;—
Rose kissed me to-day,—
Will she kiss me to-morrow?

CIRCLE

In the School of Coquettes
Madam Rose is a scholar:—
O, they fish with all nets
In the School of Coquettes!
When her brooch she forgets
'Tis to show her new collar;
In the School of Coquettes
Madam Rose is a scholar!

A TEAR

There's a tear in her eye,—
Such a clear little jewel!
What *can* make her cry?
There's a tear in her eye,
"Puck has killed a big fly,—
And it's *horribly* cruel;"
There's a tear in her eye,—
Such a clear little jewel!

A GREEK GIFT

Here's a present for Rose,
How pleased she is looking!
Is it verse?—is it prose?
Here's a present for Rose!
"*Plats*," "*Entrées*," and "*Rôts*,"—
Why, it's "Gouffé on Cooking;"
Here's a present for Rose,
How pleased she is looking!

"URCEUS EXIT"

I intended an Ode,
And it turned to a Sonnet.
It began *à la mode*,
I intended an Ode;
But Rose crossed the road
In her latest new bonnet;
I intended an Ode;
And it turned to a Sonnet.

THE WANDERER

[1888.]

Love comes back to his vacant dwelling,—
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!
We see him stand by the open door,
With his great eyes sad and his bosom
swelling.

He makes as though in our arms repelling,
He fain would lie as he lay before;—
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling,—
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!

Ah, who shall help us from over-spelling
That sweet forgotten, forbidden lore!
E'en as we doubt in our heart once more,
With a rush of tears to our eyelids welling,
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling.

ON THE HURRY OF THIS TIME

[1888.]

WITH slower pen men used to write,
Of old, when "letters" were "polite;"
In ANNA'S, or in GEORGE'S days,
They could afford to turn a phrase,
Or trim a straggling theme aright.

They knew not steam; electric light
Not yet had dazed their calmer sight;—
They meted out both blame and praise
With slower pen.

Too swiftly now the Hours take flight!
What's read at morn is dead at night:
Scant space have we for Art's delays,
Whose breathless thought so briefly stays,
We may not work—ah! would we might!—
With slower pen.

"WHEN BURBADGE PLAYED"

[1888.]

WHEN Burbadge played, the stage was bare
Of fount and temple, tower and stair;
Two backwords eked a battle out;
Two supers made a rabble rout;
The Throne of Denmark was a chair!

And yet, no less, the audience there
Thrilled through all changes of Despair,
Hope, Anger, Fear, Delight, and Doubt
When Burbadge played!

This is the Actor's gift; to share
All moods, all passions, nor to care
One whit for scene, so he without
Can lead men's minds the roundabout
Stirred as of old those hearers were
When Burbadge played!

ON A NANKIN PLATE

[1888.]

"Ah me, but it might have been!
Was there ever so dismal a fate?"—
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

"Such a maid as was never seen!
She passed, tho' I cried to her 'Wait,'—
Ah me, but it might have been!

"I cried, 'O my Flower, my Queen,
Be mine!' 'Twas precipitate,"—
Quoth the little blue mandarin, —

"But then . . . she was just sixteen,
Long-eyed, — as a lily straight, —
Ah me, but it might have been!

"As it was, from her palankeen,
She laughed — 'You're a week too late!'"
(Quoth the little blue mandarin.)

"That is why, in a mist of spleen,
I mourn on this Nankin Plate.
Ah me, but it might have been!" —
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

ON A FAN THAT BELONGED TO
THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR

[1888.]

CHICKEN-SKIN, delicate, white,
Painted by Carlo Vanloo,
Loves in a riot of light,
Roses and vaporous blue;
Hark to the dainty *frou-frou!*
Picture above, if you can,
Eyes that could melt as the dew, —
This was the Pompadour's fan!

See how they rise at the sight,
Thronging the *Œil de Bœuf* through
Courtiers as butterflies bright,
Beauties that Fragonard drew,
Talon-rouge, falbala, queue,
Cardinal, Duke, — to a man,
Eager to sigh or to sue, —
This was the Pompadour's fan!

Ah, but things more than polite
Hung on this toy, *voyez-vous!*
Matters of state and of might,
Things that great ministers do;
Things that, maybe, overthrew
Those in whose brains they began;
Here was the sign and the cue, —
This was the Pompadour's fan!

ENVOY

Where are the secrets it knew?
Weavings of plot and of plan?
— But where is the Pompadour, too?
This was the Pompadour's Fan!

A BALLAD OF ANTIQUARIES

[1881.]

THE days decay as flowers of grass,
The years as silent waters flow;
All things that are depart, alas!
As leaves the winnowing breezes strow;
And still while yet, full-orbed and slow,
New suns the old horizon climb,
Old Time must reap, as others sow;
We are the gleaners after Time!

We garner all the things that pass,
We harbour all the winds may blow;
As misers we up-store, amass
All gifts the hurrying Fates bestow;

Old chronicles of feast and show,
Old waifs of by-gone rune and rhyme,
Old jests that made old banquets glow:—
We are the gleaners after Time!

We hoard old lore of lad and lass,
Old flowers that in old gardens grow,
Old records writ on tomb and brass,
Old spoils of arrow-head and bow,

Old wrecks of old worlds' overthrow,
Old relics of Earth's primal slime,
All drift that wanders to and fro:—
We are the gleaners after Time!

ENVOY

Friends, that we know not and we know!
We pray you, by this Christmas chime,
Help us to save the things that go:
We are the gleaners after Time!

RUDYARD KIPLING

(1865—)

L'ENVOI

(From LIFE'S HANDICAP)

My new-cut ashlar takes the light
Where crimson-blank the windows flare;
By my own work, before the night,
Great Overseer, I make my prayer.
If there be good in that I wrought,
Thy hand compelled it, Master, Thine;
Where I have failed to meet Thy thought
I know, through Thee, the blame is mine.
One instant's toil to Thee denied
Stands all Eternity's offence,
Of that I did with Thee to guide
To Thee, through Thee, be excellence.
Who, lest all thought of Eden fade,
Bring'st Eden to the craftsman's brain,
Godlike to muse o'er his own trade
And Manlike stand with God again.
The depth and dream of my desire,
The bitter paths wherein I stray,
Thou knowest Who hast made the Fire,
Thou knowest Who hast made the Clay.
One stone the more swings to her place
In that dread Temple of Thy Worth—
It is enough that through Thy grace
I saw naught common on Thy earth.
Take not that vision from my ken;
Oh whatso'er may spoil or speed,
Help me to need no aid from men
That I may help such men as need!

MANDALAY

(From BARRACK ROOM BALLADS.)

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin'
eastward to the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know
she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the
temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come
you back to Mandalay!"
Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin'
from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder
outer China 'crost the Bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap
was green,
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat—jes' the
same as Theebaw's Queen,
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin'
white cheroot,
An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an
'eathen idol's foot:

Bloomin' idol made o' mud—
Wot they called the Great Gawd
Budd—
Plucky lot she cared for idols when
I kissed 'er where she stud!
On the road to Mandalay . . .

When the mist was on the rice-fields an'
the sun was droppin' slow
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing
"Kulla-lo-lo!"
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er
cheek agin my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the
hathis pilin' teak.

Elephints a-pilin' teak
In the sludgy, squdgy creek,
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you
was 'arf afraid to speak!
On the road to Mandalay . . .

But that's all shove be'ind me—long ago
an' fur away,
An' there ain't no 'busses runnin' from the
Bank to Mandalay;
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the
ten-year soldier tells:
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you
won't never 'eed naught else."

No! you won't 'eed nothin' else
But them spicy garlic smells,
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees
an' the tinkly temple-bells;
On the road to Mandalay . . .

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty
pavin'-stones,
An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the
fever in my bones;
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer
Chelsea to the Strand,
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do
they understand?

Beefy face an' grubby 'and —
 Law! wot do they understand?
 I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a
 cleaner, greener land!
 On the road to Mandalay . . .

Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where
 the best is like the worst,
 Where there aren't no Ten Commandments
 an' a man can raise a thirst;
 For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's
 there that I would be —
 By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking
 lazy at the sea;

On the road to Mandalay,
 Where the old Flotilla lay,
 With our sick beneath the awnings
 when we went to Mandalay!
 O the road to Mandalay!
 Where the flyin'-fishes play,
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder
 outer China 'crost the Bay!

TOMLINSON

(From SERVICE SONGS.)

1891

Now Tomlinson gave up the ghost in his
 house in Berkeley Square,
 And a Spirit came to his bedside and
 gripped him by the hair —
 A Spirit gripped him by the hair and
 carried him far away,
 Till he heard as the roar of a rain-fed
 ford the roar of the Milky Way:
 Till he heard the roar of the Milky Way
 die down and drone and cease,
 And they came to the Gate within the
 Wall where Peter holds the keys.
 "Stand up, stand up now, Tomlinson, and
 answer loud and high
 "The good that ye did for the sake of men
 or ever ye came to die —
 "The good that ye did for the sake of
 men in little earth so lone!"
 And the naked soul of Tomlinson grew
 white as a rain-washed bone.
 'O I have a friend on earth," he said,
 "that was my priest and guide,
 "And well would he answer all for me if
 he were by my side."
 — "For that ye strove in neighbour-love it
 shall be written fair,
 "But now ye wait at Heaven's Gate and
 not in Berkeley Square:
 "Though we called your friend from his
 bed this night, he could not speak for
 you,
 "For the race is run by one and one and
 never by two and two."

Then Tomlinson looked up and down, and
 little gain was there,
 For the naked stars grinned overhead, and
 he saw that his soul was bare:
 The Wind that blows between the Worlds,
 it cut him like a knife,
 And Tomlinson took up the tale and spoke
 of his good in life.
 "Oh this I have read in a book," he said,
 "and that was told to me,
 "And this I have thought that another man
 thought of a Prince in Muscovy."
 The good souls flocked like homing doves
 and bade him clear his path,
 And Peter twirled the jangling keys in
 weariness and wrath.
 "Ye have read, ye have heard, ye have
 thought," he said, "and the tale is yet
 to run:
 "By the worth of the body that once ye
 had, give answer — what ha' ye done?"
 Then Tomlinson looked back and forth,
 and little good it bore,
 For the Darkness stayed at his shoulder-
 blade and Heaven's Gate before: —
 "Oh this I have felt, and this I have
 guessed, and this I have heard men
 say,
 "And this they wrote that another man
 wrote of a carl in Norrway."
 "Ye have read, ye have felt, ye have
 guessed, good lack! Ye have ham-
 pered Heaven's Gate;
 "There's little room between the stars in
 idleness to prate!
 "O none may reach by hired speech of
 neighbour, priest, and kin
 "Through borrowed deed to God's good
 meed that lies so fair within;
 "Get hence, get hence to the Lord of
 Wrong, for doom has yet to run,
 "And . . . the faith that ye share with
 Berkeley Square uphold you, Tom-
 linson!"

The Spirit gripped him by the hair, and
 sun by sun they fell
 Till they came to the belt of Naughty
 Stars that rim the mouth of Hell:
 The first are red with pride and wrath, the
 next are white with pain,
 But the third are black with clinkered
 sin that cannot burn again:
 They may hold their path, they may leave
 their path, and never a soul to mark,
 They may burn or freeze, but they must
 not cease in the Scorn of the Outer
 Dark.
 The Wind that blows between the Worlds,
 it nipped him to the bone,
 And he yearned to the flare of Hell-gate
 there as the light of his own hearth-
 stone.

The Devil he sat behind the bars, where the desperate legions drew,
 But he caught the hasting Tomlinson and would not let him through.
 "Wot ye the price of good pit-coal that I must pay?" said he,
 "That ye rank yoursel' so fit for Hell and ask no leave of me?"
 "I am all o'er-sib to Adam's breed that ye should give me scorn,
 "For I strove with God for your First Father the day that he was born.
 "Sit down, sit down upon the slag, and answer loud and high
 "The harm that ye did to the Sons of Men or ever you came to die."
 And Tomlinson looked up and up, and saw against the night
 The belly of a tortured star blood-red in Hell-Mouth light;
 And Tomlinson looked down and down, and saw beneath his feet
 The frontlet of a tortured star milk-white in Hell-Mouth heat.
 "O I had a love on earth," said he, "that kissed me to my fall,
 "And if ye would call my love to me I know she would answer all."
 —"All that ye did in love forbid it shall be written fair,
 "But now ye wait at Hell-Mouth Gate and not in Berkeley Square:
 "Though we whistled your love, from her bed to-night, I trow she would not run,
 "For the sin ye do by two and two ye must pay for one by one!"
 The Wind that blows between the World's, it cut him like a knife,
 And Tomlinson took up the tale and spoke of his sin in life:—
 "Once I ha' laughed at the power of Love and twice at the grip of the Grave,
 "And thrice I ha' patted my God on the head that men might call me brave."
 The Devil he blew 'on a brandered soul and set it aside to cool:
 "Do ye think I would waste my good pit-coal on the hide of a brain-sick fool?"
 "I see no worth in the hobnailed mirth or the jolthead jest ye did
 "That I should waken my gentlemen that are sleeping three on a grid."
 Then Tomlinson looked back and forth, and there was little grace,
 For Hell-Gate filled the houseless Soul with the Fear of Naked Space.
 "Nay, this I ha' heard," quo' Tomlinson, "and this was noised abroad,
 "And this I ha' got from a Belgian book on the word of a dead French lord."
 —"Ye ha' heard, we ha' read, ye ha' got, good lack! and the tale begins afresh—

"Have ye sinned one sin for the pride o' the eye or the sinful lust of the flesh?"
 Then Tomlinson he gripped the bars and yammered, "Let me in—
 "For I mind that I borrowed my neighbour's wife to sin the deadly sin."
 The Devil he grinned behind the bars, and banked the fires high:
 "Did ye read of that sin in a book?" said he; and Tomlinson said "Ay!"
 The Devil he blew upon his nails, and the little devils ran,
 And he said, "Go husk this whimpering thief that comes in the guise of a man:
 "Winnow him out 'twixt star and star, and sieve his proper worth:
 "There's sore decline in Adam's line if this be spawn of earth."
 Empusa's crew, so naked-new they may not face the fire,
 But weep that they bin too small to sin to the height of their desire,
 Over the coal they chased the Soul, and racked it all abroad,
 As children rifle a caddis-case or the raven's foolish hoard.
 And back they came with the tattered Thing, as children after play,
 And they said: "The soul that he got from God he has bartered clean away.
 "We have threshed a stook of print and book, and winnowed a chattering wind
 "And many a soul wherefrom he stole, but his we cannot find:
 "We have handled him, we have dandled him, we have seared him to the bone,
 "And sure if tooth and nail show truth he has no soul of his own."
 The Devil he bowed his head on his breast and rumbled deep and low:—
 "I'm all o'er-sib to Adam's breed that I should bid him go.
 "Yet close we lie, and deep we lie, and if I gave him place,
 "My gentlemen that are so proud would flout me to my face;
 "They'd call my house a common stew and me a careless host,
 "And—I would not anger my gentlemen for the sake of a shiftless ghost."
 The Devil he looked at the mangled Soul that prayed to feel the flame,
 And he thought of Holy Charity, but he thought of his own good name:—
 "Now ye could haste my coal to waste, and sit ye down to fry:
 "Did ye think of that theft for yourself?" said he; and Tomlinson said "Ay!"
 The Devil he blew an outward breath, for his heart was free from care:—
 "Ye have scarce the soul of a louse," he said, "but the roots of sin are there,

"And for that sin should ye come in were
I the lord alone.
"But sinful pride has rule inside — and
mightier than my own.
"Honour and Wit; fore-damned they sit,
to each his Priest and Whore:
"Nay, scarce I dare myself go there, and
you they'd torture sore.
"Ye are neither spirit nor spirk," he said;
"ye are neither book nor brute —
"Go, get ye back to the flesh again for
the sake of Man's repute.
"I'm all o'er-sib to Adam's breed that I
should mock your pain,
"But look that ye win to worthier sin ere
ye come back again.
"Get hence, the hearse is at your door —
the grim black stallions wait —
"They bear your clay to place to-day.
Speed, lest ye come too late!
"Go back to Earth with a lip unsealed —
go back with an open eye,
"And carry my word to the Sons of Men
or ever ye come to die:
"That the sin they do by two and two they
must pay for one by one —
"And . . . the God that you took from a
printed book be with you, Tomlinson!"

THE LAST CHANTEY

1892

"And there was no more sea."

THUS saith the Lord in the Vault above
the Cherubim,
Calling to the Angels and the Souls in
their degree:

"Lo! Earth has passed away
On the smoke of Judgment Day.
That Our word may be established shall We
gather up the sea?"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly
mariners:

"Plague upon the hurricane that made us
furl and flee!

But the war is done between us,
In the deep the Lord hath seen us —
Our bones we'll leave the barracout', and
God may sink the sea!"

Then said the soul of Judas that betrayed
Him:

"Lord, hast Thou forgotten Thy cov-
enant with me?

How once a year I go
To cool me on the floe?
And Ye take my day of mercy if Ye take
away the sea!"

Then said the soul of the Angel of the Off-
shore Wind:

(He that bits the thunder when the bull-
mouthed breakers flee):

"I have watch and ward to keep
O'er Thy wonders on the deep,
And Ye take mine honour from me if Ye
take away the sea!"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mar-
iners:

"Nay, but we were angry, and a hasty
folk are we!

If we worked the ship together
Till she foundered in foul weather,
Are we babes that we should clamour for
a vengeance on the sea?"

Then said the souls of the slaves that men
threw overboard:

"Kennelled in the picaroon a weary band
were we;

But Thy arm was strong to save,
And it touched us on the wave,
And we drownded the long tides idle till
Thy Trumpets tore the sea."

Then cried the soul of the stout Apostle
Paul to God:

"Once we frapped a ship, and she
laboured woundily.

There were fourteen score of these,
And they blessed Thee on their knees,
When they learned Thy Grace and Glory
under Malta-by the sea!"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mar-
iners,

Plucking at their harps, and they plucked
unhandily:

"Our thumbs are rough and tarred,
And the tune is something hard —
May we lift a Deepsea Chantey such as
seamen use at sea?"

Then said the souls of the gentlemen-
adventurers —

Fettered wrist to bar all for red iniquity:

"Ho, we revel in our chains
O'er the sorrow that was Spain's;
Heave or sink it, leave or drink it, we were
masters of the sea!"

Up spake the soul of a gray Gothavn 'speck-
shioner —

(He that led the flinching in the fleets of
fair Dundee):

"Oh, the ice-blink white and near,
And the bowhead breaching clear!
Will Ye whelm them all for wantonness
that wallow in the sea?"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mar-
iners,

Crying: "Under Heaven, here is neither
lead nor lee!

Must we sing for evermore
On the windless, glassy floor?
Take back your golden fiddles and we'll
beat to open sea!"

Then stooped the Lord, and He called the
good sea up to Him,
And 'stablished His borders unto all
eternity,
That such as have no pleasure
For to praise the Lord by measure,
They may enter into galleons and serve
Him on the sea.

*Sun, wind, and cloud shall fail not from
the face of it,
Stinging, ringing spindrift, nor the ful-
mar flying free;
And the ships shall go abroad
To the Glory of the Lord
Who heard the silly sailor-folk and gave
them back their sea!*

THE SONG OF THE BANJO

1894

You couldn't pack a Broadwood half a
mile —

You mustn't leave a fiddle in the damp —
You couldn't raft an organ up the Nile,
And play it in an Equatorial swamp.
I travel with the cooking-pots and pails —
I'm sandwiched 'tween the coffee and the
pork —

And when the dusty column checks and
tails,
You should hear me spur the rearguard
to a walk!

With my "*Pilly-willy-winky-winky poppi!*"
[Oh, it's any tune that comes into my
head!]

So I keep 'em moving forward till they
drop;
So I play 'em up to water and to bed.

In the silence of the camp before the fight,
When it's good to make your will and
say your prayer,

You can hear my *strumpty-tumpty* over-
night,

Explaining ten to one was always fair.
I'm the Prophet of the Utterly Absurd,
Of the Patently Impossible and Vain —
And when the Thing that Couldn't has oc-
curred,

Give me time to change my leg and go
again.

With my "*Tumpha - tumpha - tumpha - tum - pa
tump!*"

In the desert where the dung-fed camp-
smoke curled.

There was never voice before us till I led
our lonely chorus,

I — the war-drum of the White Man
round the world!

By the bitter road the Younger Son must
tread,

Ere he win to hearth and saddle of his
own, —

'Mid the riot of the shearers at the shed,
In the silence of the herder's hut alone —
In the twilight, on the bucket upside down,
Hear me babble what the weakest won't
confess —

I am Memory and Torment — *I* am Town!
I am all that ever went with evening
dress!

Vith my "*Tunk-a tunka-tunka-tunka tunk!*"
[So the lights — the London Lights —
grow near and plain!]

So *I* rowl 'em afresh towards the Devil
and the Flesh,

Till *I* bring my broken rankers home
again.

In desire of many marvels over sea,
Where the new-raised tropic city sweats
and roars,

I have sailed with Young Ulysses from the
quay

Till the anchor rumbled down on stranger
shores.

He is blooded to the open and the sky,
He is taken in a snare that shall not fail,
He shall hear me singing strongly, till he
die,

Like the shouting of a backstay in a gale.

With my "*Hya! Heeya! Heeya! Hullah!
Haul!*"

[O the green that thunders aft along the
deck!]

Are you sick o' towns and men? You
must sign and sail again,

For it's "Johnny Bowlegs, pack your kit
and trek!"

Through the gorge that gives the stars at
noonday clear —

Up the pass that packs the scud beneath
our wheel —

Round the bluff that sinks her thousand
fathom sheer —

Down the valley with our guttering
brakes asqueal:

Where the trestle groans and quivers in
the snow,

Where the many-shedded levels loop and
twine,

Hear me lead my reckless children from
below

Till we sing the Song of Roland to the
pine.

With my "*Tinka-tinka-tinka-tinka-tink!*"

[Oh the axe has cleared the mountain,
croup and crest!]

And we ride the iron stallions down to
drink,
Through the cañons to the waters of the
West!

And the tunes that mean so much to you
alone—

Common tunes that make you choke
and blow your nose,

Vulgar tunes that bring the laugh that
brings the groan—

I can rip your very heartstrings out with
those;

With the feasting, and the folly, and the
fun—

And the lying, and the lusting, and the
drink,

And the merry play that drops you, when
you're done,

To the thoughts that burn like irons if
you think.

With my "*Plunka-lunka-lunka-lunka-lunk!*"

Here's a trifle on account of pleasure past,
Ere the wit that made you win gives you
eyes to see your sin

And—the heavier repentance at the last!

Let the organ moan her sorrow to the roof—
I have told the naked stars the Grief of
Man.

Let the trumpets snare the foeman to the
proof—

I have known Defeat, and mocked it as
we ran!

My bray ye may not alter nor mistake
When I stand to jeer the fatted Soul of
Things,

But the Song of Lost Endeavour that I
make,

Is it hidden in the twanging of the
strings?

With my "*Ta-ra-rara-rara-ra-rrp!*"

[Is it naught to you that hear and pass
me by?]

But the word—the word is mine, when the
order moves the line

And the lean, locked ranks go roaring
down to die!

The grandam of my grandam was the
Lyre—

[O the blue below the little fisher-huts!]
That the Stealer stooping beachward filled
with fire,

Till she bore my iron head and ringing
guts!

By the wisdom of the centuries I speak—
To the tune of yestermorn I set the
truth—

I, the joy of life unquestioned—I, the
Greek—

I, the everlasting Wonder Song of Youth!

With my "*Tinka-tinka-tinka-tinka-tink!*"

[What d' ye lack, my noble masters?
What d' ye lack?]

So I draw the world together link by link:
Yea, from Delos up to Limerick and
back!

ANCHOR SONG

1893.

HEH! Walk her round. Heave, ah, heave
her short again!

Over, snatch her over, there, and hold
her on the pawl.

Loose all sail, and brace your yards back
and full—

Ready jib to pay her off and heave short
all!

Well, ah, fare you well; we can stay no
more with you, my love—

Down, set down your liquor and your
girl from off your knee;

For the wind has come to say:
"You must take me while you may,

If you'd go to Mother Carey,
(Walk her down to Mother Carey!),

Oh, we're bound to Mother Carey
where she feeds her chicks at sea!"

HEH! Walk her round. Break, ah break
it out o' that!

Break our starboard-bower out, apeak,
awash, and clear.

Port—port she casts, with the harbour-
mud beneath her foot,

And that's the last o' bottom we shall
see this year!

Well, ah, fare you well, for we've got to
take her out again—

Take her out in ballast, riding light
and cargo-free.

And it's time to clear and quit
When the hawser grips the bitt,

So we'll pay you with the foresheet
and a promise from the sea!

HEH! Tally on. Aft and walk away with
her!

Handsome to the cathead, now; O tally
on the fall!

Stop, seize and fish, and easy on the davit-
guy.

Up, well up the fluke of her, and in-
board haul!

Well, ah, fare you well, for the Channel
wind's took hold of us,

Choking down our voices as we snatch
the gaskets free.

And she's blowing up for night,
And she's dropping light on light,

And she's snorting and she's snatching
for a breath of open sea!

Wheel, full and by; but she'll smell her
road alone to-night.

Sick she is and harbour-sick—O sick
to clear the land!

Roll down to Brest with the old Red
Ensign over us—

Carry on and thrash her out with all
she'll stand!

Well, ah, fare you well, and it's Ushant
slams the door on us.

Whirling like a windmill through the
dirty scud to lee:

Till the last, last flicker goes

From the tumbling water-rows,

And we're off to Mother Carey

(Walk her down to Mother Carey!),

Oh, we're bound for Mother Carey
where she feeds her chicks at sea!

SESTINA OF THE TRAMP-ROYAL

1896

SPEAKIN' in general, I 'ave tried 'em all—
The 'appy roads that take you o'er the
world.

Speakin' in general, I 'ave found them
good

For such as cannot use one bed too long,
But must get 'ence, the same as I 'ave
done,

An' go observin' matters till they die.

What do it matter where or 'ow we die,
So long as we've our 'ealth to watch it
all—

The different ways that different things are
done,

An' men an' women lovin' in this world;
Takin' our chances as they come along,
An' when they ain't, pretendin' they are
good?

In cash or credit—no, it are n't no good;
You 'ave to 'ave the 'abit or you'd die,
Unless you lived your life but one day
long,

Nor didn't prophesy nor fret at all,
But drew your tucker some'ow from the
world,

An' never bothered what you might ha'
done.

But, Gawd, what things are they I 'aven't
done!

I've turned my 'and to most, an' turned
it good,

In various situations round the world—
For 'im that doth not work must surely
die;

But that's no reason man should labour
all

'Is life on one same shift; life's none so
long.

Therefore, from job to job I've moved
along.

Pay couldn't 'old me when my time was
done,

For something in my 'ead upset me all,
Till I 'ad dropped whatever 't was for

good,

An', out at sea, be'eld the dock-lights die,
An' met my mate—the wind that tramps
the world.

It's like a book, I think, this bloomin'
world,

Which you can read and care for just so
long,

But presently you feel that you will die
Unless you get the page you're readin'

done,

An' turn another—likely not so good;
But what you're after is to turn 'em
all.

Gawd bless this world! Whatever she 'ath
done—

Excep' when awful long—I've found it
good.

So write, before I die, "E liked it all!"

RECESSIONAL

(FROM SERVICE SONGS.)

1897

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

ERNEST DOWSON

(1867-1900)

VITAE SUMMA BREVIS SPEM NOS VETAT INCOHARE LONGAM

[1896.]

THEY are not long, the weeping and the
laughter,
Love and desire and hate:
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

They are not long, the days of wine and
roses:
Out of a misty dream
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION

[1899.]

CALM, sad, secure; behind high convent
walls,
These watch the sacred lamp, these watch
and pray:
And it is one with them when evening
falls,
And one with them the cold return of
day.

These heed not time; their nights and
days they make
Into a long, returning rosary,
Whereon their lives are threaded for
Christ's sake;
Meekness and vigilance and chastity.

A vowed patrol, in silent companies,
Life-long they keep before the living
Christ.
In the dim church, their prayers and pen-
ances
Are fragrant incense to the Sacrificed.

Outside, the world is wild and passionate;
Man's weary laughter and his sick de-
spair
Entreat at their impenetrable gate:
They heed no voices in their dream of
prayer.

They saw the glory of the world dis-
played;
They saw the bitter of it, and the sweet;
They knew the roses of the world should
fade,
And be trod under by the hurrying feet.

Therefore they rather put away desire,
And crossed their hands and came to
sanctuary
And veiled their heads and put on coarse
attire:
Because their comeliness was vanity.

And there they rest; they have serene
insight
Of the illuminating dawn to be:
Mary's sweet Star dispels for them the
night,
The proper darkness of humanity.

Calm, sad, secure; with faces worn and
mild:
Surely their choice of vigil is the best?
Yea! for our roses fade, the world is
wild:
But there, beside the altar, there, is rest.

AMOR PROFANUS

[1896.]

BEYOND the pale of memory,
In some mysterious dusky grove;
A place of shadows utterly,
Where never coos the turtle-dove,
A world forgotten of the sun:
I dreamed we met when day was done,
And marvelled at our ancient love.

Met there by chance, long kept apart,
We wandered through the darkling glades;
And that old language of the heart
We sought to speak: alas! poor shades!
Over our pallid lips had run
The waters of oblivion,
Which crown all loves of men or maids.

In vain we stammered: from afar
Our old desire shone cold and dead:
That time was distant as a star,
When eyes were bright and lips were red.
And still we went with downcast eye
And no delight in being nigh,
Poor shadows most uncomfortable.

Ah, Lalage! while life is ours,
Hoard not thy beauty rose and white,
But pluck the pretty, fleeting flowers
That deck our little path of light:
For all too soon we twain shall tread
The bitter pastures of the dead:
Estranged, sad spectres of the night.

YVONNE OF BRITTANY

[1896.]

In your mother's apple-orchard,
Just a year ago, last spring:

Do you remember, Yvonne!

The dear trees lavishing
Rain of their starry blossoms
To make you a coronet?

Do you remember, Yvonne?

As I remember yet.

In your mother's apple-orchard,

When the world was left behind:

You were shy, so shy, Yvonne!

But your eyes were calm and kind.

We spoke of the apple harvest,

When the cider press is set,

And such-like trifles, Yvonne!

That doubtless you forget.

In the still, soft Breton twilight,

We were silent; words were few,

Till your mother came out chiding.

For the grass was bright with dew:

But I know your heart was beating,

Like a fluttered, frightened dove.

Do you ever remember, Yvonne?

That first faint flush of love?

In the fulness of midsummer,

When the apple-bloom was shed,

Oh, brave was your surrender,

Though shy the words you said.

I was so glad, so glad, Yvonne!

To have led you home at last;

Do you ever remember, Yvonne!

How swiftly the days passed?

In your mother's apple-orchard

It is grown too dark to stray,

There is none to chide you, Yvonne!

You are over far away.

There is dew on your grave grass, Yvonne!

But your feet it shall not wet:

No, you never remember, Yvonne!

And I shall soon forget.

BENEDICTIO DOMINI

[1896.]

WITHOUT, the sullen noises of the street!

The voice of London, inarticulate,

Hoarse and blaspheming, surges in to meet

The silent blessing of the Immaculate.

Dark is the church, and dim the worship-
pers,

Hushed with bowed heads as though by
some old spell,

While through the incense-laden air there
stirs

The admonition of a silver bell.

Dark is the church, save where the altar
stands,

Dressed like a bride, illustrious with
light,

Where one old priest exalts with tremulous
hands

The one true solace of man's fallen
plight.

Strange silence here: without, the sounding
street

Heralds the world's swift passage to the
fire:

O Benediction, perfect and complete!

When shall men cease to suffer and de-
sire?

NON SUM QUALIS ERAM BONAE
SUB REGNO CYNARAE

[1896.]

LAST night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her
lips and mine

There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath
was shed

Upon my soul between the kisses and the
wine;

And I was desolate and sick of an old
passion,

Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:

I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my
fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm
heart beat,

Night-long within mine arms in love and
sleep she lay;

Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth
were sweet;

But I was desolate and sick of an old
passion,

When I awoke and found the dawn was
gray:

I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in
my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the
wind,

Flung roses, roses riotously with the
throng,

Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of
mind;

But I was desolate and sick of an old
passion,

Yea, all the time, because the dance was
long:

I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my
fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger
wine,

But when the feast is finished and the
lamps expire,

Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night
is thine;

And I am desolate and sick of an old
 passion,
 Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
 I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in
 my fashion.

SPLEEN

[1896.]

I was not sorrowful, I could not weep,
 And all my memories were put to sleep.

I watched the river grow more white and
 strange,
 All day till evening I watched it change.

All day till evening I watched the rain
 Beat wearily upon the window pane.

I was not sorrowful, but only tired
 Of everything that ever I desired.

Her lips, her eyes, all day became to me
 The shadow of a shadow utterly.

All day mine hunger for her heart became
 Oblivion, until the evening came,

And left me sorrowful, inclined to weep,
 With all my memories that could not sleep.

YOU WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD
ME

Ah, dans ces mornes séjours
 Les jamais sont les toujours
 PAUL VERLAINE.

[1896.]

You would have understood me, had you
 waited;

I could have loved you, dear! as well
 as he:

Had we not been impatient, dear! and
 fated

Always to disagree.

What is the use of speech? Silence were
 fitter:

Lest we should still be wishing things
 unsaid.

Though all the words we ever spake were
 bitter,

Shall I reproach you dead?

Nay, let this earth, your portion, likewise
 cover

All the old anger, setting us apart:

Always, in all, in truth was I your lover;
 Always, I held your heart.

I have met other women who were tender,
 As you were cold, dear! with a grace as
 rare.

Think you, I turned to them, or made
 surrender,

I who had found you fair?

Had we been patient, dear! ah, had you
 waited,

I had fought death for you, better than
 he:

But from the very first, dear! we were
 fated

Always to disagree.

Late, late, I come to you, now death dis-
 closes

Love that in life was not to be our
 part:

On your low lying mound between the
 roses,

Sadly I cast my heart.

I would not waken you: nay! this is fitter;
 Death and the darkness give you unto
 me;

Here we who loved so, were so cold and
 bitter,

Hardly can disagree.

VAIN RESOLVES

[1896.]

I SAID: "There is an end of my desire:

Now have I sown, and I have harvested,
 And these are ashes of an ancient fire,

Which, verily, shall not be quickened.

Now will I take me to a place of peace,

Forget mine heart's desire;

In solitude and prayer, work out my soul's
 release.

"I shall forget her eyes, how cold they
 were;

Forget her voice, how soft it was and
 low,

With all my singing that she did not hear,
 And all my service that she did not

know.

I shall not hold the merest memory

Of any days that were,

Within those solitudes where I will fasten
 me."

And once she passed, and once she raised
 her eyes,

And smiled for courtesy, and nothing
 said:

And suddenly the old flame did uprise,

And all my dead desire was quickened.

Yea! as it hath been, it shall ever be,

Most passionless, pure eyes!

Which never shall grow soft, nor change,
 nor pity me.

IMPENITENTIA ULTIMA

[1896.]

BEFORE my light goes out for ever if God
 should give me a choice of graces,

I would not reck of length of days, nor
 crave for things to be;

But cry: "One day of the great lost days,
one face of all the faces,
Grant me to see and touch once more
and nothing more to see.

"For, Lord, I was free of all Thy flowers,
but I chose the world's sad roses,
And that is why my feet are torn and
mine eyes are blind with sweat,
But at Thy terrible judgment-seat, when
this my tired life closes,
I am ready to reap whereof I sowed,
and pay my righteous debt.

"But once before the sand is run and the
silver thread is broken,
Give me a grace and cast aside the veil of
dolorous years,
Grant me one hour of all mine hours, and
let me see for a token
Her pure and pitiful eyes shine out, and
bathe her feet with tears."

Her pitiful hands should calm, and her hair
stream down and blind me,
Out of the sight of night, and out of
the reach of fear,
And her eyes should be my light whilst
the sun went out behind me,
And the viols in her voice be the last
sound in mine ear.

Before the ruining waters fall and my life
be carried under,
And Thine anger cleave me through as
a child cuts down a flower,
I will praise Thee, Lord in Hell, while my
limbs are racked asunder,
For the last sad sight of her face and
the little grace of an hour.

CARTHUSIANS

THROUGH what long heaviness, assayed in
what strange fire,
Have these white monks been brought
into the way of peace,
Despising the world's wisdom and the
world's desire,
Which from the body of this death
bring no release?

Within their austere walls no voices pen-
etrate;
A sacred silence only, as of death, ob-
tains;
Nothing finds entry here of loud or pas-
sionate;
This quiet is the exceeding profit of
their pains.

From many lands they came, in divers fiery
ways;
Each knew at last the vanity of earthly
joys;

And one was crowned with thorns, and
one was crowned with bays,
And each was tired at last of the world's
foolish noise.

It was not theirs with Dominic to preach
God's holy wrath,
They were too stern to bear sweet Fran-
cis' gentle sway;
Theirs was a higher calling and a steeper
path,
To dwell alone with Christ, to meditate
and pray.

A cloistered company, they are companion-
less,
None knoweth here the secret of his
brother's heart:
They are but come together for more lone-
liness,
Whose bond is solitude and silence all
their part.

O beatific life! Who is there shall gainsay,
Your great refusal's victory, your little
loss,
Deserting vanity for the more perfect way,
The sweeter service of the most dolorous
Cross.

Ye shall prevail at last! Surely ye shall
prevail!
Your silence and austerity shall win at
last:
Desire and mirth, the world's ephemeral
lights shall fail,
The sweet star of your queen is never
overcast.

We fling up flowers and laugh, we laugh
across the wine;
With wine we dull our souls and care-
ful strains of art;
Our cups are polished skulls round which
the roses twine:
None dares to look at Death who leers
and lurks apart.

Move on, white company, whom that has
not sufficed!
Our viols cease, our wine is death, our
roses fail:
Pray for our heedlessness, O dwellers with
the Christ!
Though the world fall apart, surely ye
shall prevail.

VILLANELLE OF THE POET'S ROAD

[1899.]

WINE and woman and song,
Three things garnish our way:
Yet is day over long.

Lest we do our youth wrong,
Gather them while we may:
Wine and woman and song.

Three things render us strong,
Vine leaves, kisses and bay;
Yet is day over long.

Unto us they belong,
Us the bitter and gay,
Wine and woman and song.

We, as we pass along,
Are sad that they will not stay;
Yet is day over long.

Fruits and flowers among,
What is better than they:
Wine and woman and song?
Yet is day over long.

DREGS

[1899.]

THE fire is out, and spent the warmth
thereof
(This is the end of every song man sings!)
The golden wine is drunk, the dregs remain,
Bitter as wormwood and as salt as pain;
And health and hope have gone the way
of love
Into the drear oblivion of lost things.
Ghosts go along with us until the end;
This was a mistress, this, perhaps, a friend.
With pale, indifferent eyes, we sit and
wait
For the dropt curtain and the closing gate:
This is the end of all the songs man sings.

LIBERA ME

[1899.]

GODDESS the laughter-loving, Aphrodite,
befriend!
Long have I served thine altars, serve me
now at the end,
Let me have peace of thee, truce of thee,
golden one, send.
Heart of my heart have I offered thee, pain
of my pain,
Yielding my life for the love of thee into
thy chain;
Lady and goddess be merciful, loose me
again.
All things I had that were fairest, my
dearest and best,
Fed the fierce flames on thine altar: ah,
surely, my breast

Shrined thee alone among goddesses,
spurning the rest.

Blossom of youth thou hast plucked of
me, flower of my days;
Stinted I nought in thine honouring, walked
in thy ways,
Song of my soul pouring out to thee, all in
thy praise.

Fierce was the flame while it lasted, and
strong was thy wine,
Meet for immortals that die not, for throats
such as thine,
Too fierce for bodies of mortals, too potent
for mine.

Blossom and bloom hast thou taken, now
render to me
Ashes of life that remain to me, few
though they be,
Truce of the love of thee, Cyprian, let me
go free.

Goddess the laughter-loving, Aphrodite,
restore
Life to the limbs of me, liberty, hold me
no more
Having the first-fruits and flower of me,
cast me the core.

A LAST WORD

[1899.]

LET us go hence: the night is now at hand;
The day is overworn, the birds all flown;
And we have reaped the crops the gods
have sown;
Despair and death; deep darkness o'er the
land,
Broods like an owl; we cannot under-
stand
Laughter or tears, for we have only
known
Surpassing vanity: vain things alone
Have driven our perverse and aimless
band.

Let us go hence, somewhither strange and
cold,
To Hollow Lands where just men and
unjust
Find end of labour, where's rest for the
old,
Freedom to all from love and fear and
lust.
Twine our torn hands! O pray the earth
enfold
Our life-sick hearts and turn them into
dust.

ARTHUR SYMONS

[1865—]

THE STREET-SINGER

[1889.]

SHE sings a pious ballad wearily;
Her shivering body creeps on painful feet
Along the muddy runlets of the street;
The damp is in her throat; she coughs to
free
The cracked and husky notes that tear her
chest;
From side to side she looks with eyes that
grobe,
Feverishly hungering in a hopeless hope,
For pence that will not come; and pence
mean rest,
The rest that pain may steal at night from
sleep,
The rest that hunger gives when satisfied;
Her fingers twitch to handle them; she
sings
Shriller; her eyes, too hot with tears to
weep,
Fasten upon a window, where, inside,
A sweet voice mocks her with its carol-
lings.

ON THE BEACH

[1892.]

NIGHT, a grey sky, a ghostly sea,
The soft beginning of the rain;
Black on the horizon, sails that wane
Into the distance mistily.

The tide is rising, I can hear
The soft roar broadening far along;
It cries and murmurs in my ear
A sleepy old forgotten song.

Softly the stealthy night descends,
The black sails fade into the sky:
Is not this, where the sea-line ends,
The shore-line of infinity?

I cannot think or dream; the grey
Unending waste of sea and night,
Dull, impotently infinite,
Blots out the very hope of day.

APRIL MIDNIGHT

[1892.]

SIDE by side through the streets at midnight,
Roaming together,
Through the tumultuous night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

Roaming together under the gaslight,
Day's work over,
How the Spring calls to us, here in the city,
Calls to the heart from the heart of a
lover!

Cool the wind blows, fresh in our faces,
Cleansing, entrancing,
After the heat and the fumes and the foot-
lights,
Where you dance and I watch your
dancing.

Good it is to be here together,
Good to be roaming,
Even in London, even at midnight,
Lover-like in a lover's gloaming.

You the dancer and I the dreamer,
Children together,
Wandering lost in the night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

IN THE TRAIN

[1892.]

THE train through the night of the town,
Through a blackness broken in twain
By the sudden finger of streets;
Lights, red, yellow, and brown,
From curtain and window-pane,
The flashing eyes of the streets.

Night, and the rush of the train,
A cloud of smoke through the town,
Scaring the life of the streets;
And the leap of the heart again,
Out into the night, and down
The dazzling vista of streets!

PROLOGUE: BEFORE THE CURTAIN

[1895.]

WE are the puppets of a shadow-play,
We dream the plot is woven of our hearts,
Passionately we play the self-same parts
Our fathers have played passionately yes-
terday,
And our sons play to-morrow. There's no
speech
In all desire, nor any idle word,
Men have not said and women have not
heard;
And when we lean and whisper each to each
Until the silence quickens to a kiss,

Even so the actor and the actress played
The lovers yesterday; when the lights fade
Before our feet, and the obscure abyss
Opens, and darkness falls about our eyes,
'Tis only that some momentary rage
Or rapture blinds us to forget the stage,
Like the wise actor, most in this thing wise.
We pass, and have our gesture; love and
pain

And hope and apprehension and regret
Weave ordered lines into a pattern set
Not for our pleasure, and for us in vain.
The gesture is eternal; we who pass
Pass on the gesture; we, who pass, pass on
One after one into oblivion,
As shadows dim and vanish from a glass.

EPILOGUE: CREDO

[1895.]

EACH, in himself, his hour to be and cease
Endures alone, but who of men shall dare,
Sole with himself, his single burden bear,
All the long day until the night's release?
Yet ere night falls, and the last shadows
close,

This labour of himself is each man's lot;
All he has gained of earth shall be forgot,
Himself he leaves behind him when he
goes.

If he has any valiancy within,
If he has made his life his very own,
If he has loved or laboured, and has known
A strenuous virtue, or a strenuous sin;
Then, being dead, his life was not all vain,
For he has saved what most desire to lose,
And he has chosen what the few must
choose,

Since life, once lived, shall not return
again.

For of our time we lose so large a part
In serious trifles, and so oft let slip
The wine of every moment, at the lip
Its moment, and the moment of the heart.
We are awake so little on the earth,
And we shall sleep so long, and rise so
late,

If there is any knocking at that gate
Which is the gate of death, the gate of
birth.

SEA-WIND

(Translated from Stéphane Mallarmé.)

THE flesh is sad, alas! and all the books
are read.

Flight, only flight! I feel that birds are
wild to tread

The floor of unknown foam, and to attain
the skies!

Nought, neither ancient gardens mirrored
in the eyes,

Shall hold this heart that bathes in waters
its delight,

O nights! nor yet my waking lamp, whose
lonely light

Shadows the vacant paper, whiteness profits
best,

Nor the young wife who rocks her baby on
her breast.

I will depart! O steamer, swaying rope
and spar,

Lift anchor for exotic lands that lie afar!
A weariness, outworn by cruel hopes, still
clings

To the last farewell handkerchief's last
beckonings!

And are not these, the masts inviting
storms, not these

That an awakening wind bends over wreck-
ing seas,

Lost, not a sail, a sail, a flowering isle, ere
long?

But, O my heart, hear thou, hear thou the
sailors' song!

FROM ROMANCES SANS PAROLES

(Translated from Paul Verlaine.)

TEARS in my heart that weeps,
Like the rain upon the town.
What drowsy languor steeps
In tears my heart that weeps?

O sweet sound of the rain
On earth and on the roofs!
For a heart's weary pain
O the song of the rain!

Vain tears, vain tears, my heart!
What, none hath done thee wrong?
Tears without reason start
From my disheartened heart.

This is the weariest woe,
O heart, of love and hate
Too weary, not to know
Why thou hast all this woe.

ARQUES — AFTERNOON

[1897.]

GENTLY a little breeze begins to creep
Into the valley, and the sleeping trees
Are stirred, and breathe a little in their
sleep,
And nod, half-wakened, to the breeze

Cool little quiet shadows wander out
Across the fields, and dapple with dark
trails

The snake-grey road coiled stealthily about
The green hill climbing from the vales.

And faintlier, in this cooler peace of things,
My brooding thoughts, a scattered flock
grown few,
Withdrawn upon their melancholy wing,
Float farther off against the blue.

CHOPIN

[1897.]

O PASSIONATE music beating the troubled
beat

I have heard in my heart, in the wind, in
the passing of feet,
In the passing of dreams, when on heart-
throbbing wings they move;

O passionate music pallid with ghostly
fears,

Chill with the coming of rain, the begin-
ning of tears,

I come to you, fleeing you, finding you,
fever of love!

When I am sleepless at night and I play
through the night,

Lest I hear a voice, lest I see, appealing
and white,

The face that never, in dreams or at dawn,
departs,

Then it is, shuddering music my hands
have played,

I find you, fleeing you, finding you, music,
made

Of all passionate, wounded, capricious
consuming hearts.

THE OLD WOMEN

[1899.]

THEY pass upon their old, tremulous feet,
Creeping with little satchels down the
street,

And they remember, many years ago,
Passing that way in silks. They wander,
slow

And solitary, through the city ways,
And they alone remember those old days
Men have forgotten. In their shaking
heads

A dancer of old carnivals yet treads
The measure of past waltzes, and they see
The candles lit again, the patchouli
Sweeten the air, and the warm cloud of
musk

Enchant the passing of the passionate
dusk.

Then you will see a light begin to creep
Under the earthen eyelids, dimmed with
sleep,

And a new tremor, happy and uncouth,
Jerking about the corners of the mouth.

Then the old head drops down again, and
shakes,

Muttering.

Sometimes, when the swift gaslight wakes
The dreams and fever of the sleepless
town,

A shaking huddled thing in a black gown
Will steal at midnight, carrying with her
Violet little bags of lavender,

Into the tap-room full of noisy light;
Or, at the crowded earlier hour of night,

Side, with matches, up to some who stand
About a stage-door, and, with furtive hand,

Appealing: "I too was a dancer, when
Your fathers would have been young
gentlemen!"

And sometimes, out of some lean ancient
throat,

A broken voice, with here and there a note
Of unspoilt crystal, suddenly will arise

Into the night, while a cracked fiddle cries
Pantingly after; and you know she sings

The passing of light, famous, passing
things.

And sometimes, in the hours past midnight,
reels

Out of an alley upon staggering heels,
Or into the dark keeping of the stones

About a doorway, a vague thing of bones
And dragged hair.

And all these have been loved.

And not one ruinous body has not moved
The heart of man's desire, nor has not
seemed

Immortal in the eyes of one who dreamed
The dream that men call love. This is
the end

Of much fair flesh; it is for this you tend
Your delicate bodies many careful years,

To be this thing of laughter and of tears,
To be this living judgment of the dead,

An old grey woman with a shaking head.

THE UNLOVED

THESE are the women whom no man has
loved.

Year after year, day after day has moved
These hearts with many longings; and with
tears,

And with content; they have received the
years

With empty hands, expecting no good
thing;

Life has passed by their doors, not enter-
ing.

In solitude, and without vain desire,
They have warmed themselves beside a
lonely fire;

And, without scorn, beheld as in a glass
The blown and painted leaves of Beauty
pass.

Their souls have been made fragrant with
the spice

Of costly virtues lit for sacrifice;

They have accepted Life, the unpaid debt,
And looked for no vain day of reckoning.

Yet

They too in certain windless summer hours
Have felt the stir of dreams, and dreamed
the powers

And the exemptions and the miracles
And the cruelty of Beauty. Citadels
Of many-walled and deeply-moated hearts
Have suddenly surrendered to the arts
Of so compelling magic; entering,
They have esteemed it but a little thing
To have won so great a conquest; and
with haste

They have cast down, and utterly laid
waste,

Tower upon tower, and sapped their roots
with flame;

And passed on that eternity of shame
Which is the way of Beauty on the earth.
And they have shaken laughter from its
mirth,

To be a sound of trumpets and of horns
Crying the battle-cry of those red morns
Against a sky of triumph.

On some nights

Of delicate Springtide, when the hesitant
lights

Begin to fade, and glimmer, and grow
warm,

And all the softening air is quick with
storm,

And the ardours of the young year, enter-
ing in,

Flush the grey earth with buds; when
the trees begin

To feel a trouble mounting from their
roots,

And all their green life blossoming into
shoots,

They too, in some obscure, unblossoming
strife,

Have felt the stirring of the sap of life.

And they have wept, with bowed head; in
the street

They hear the twittering of little feet,
The rocking of the cradles in their hearts.

This is a mood, and, as a mood, departs
With the dried tears; and they resume the
tale

Of the dropt stitches; these must never fail
For a dream's sake; nor, for a memory,
The telling of a patient rosary.

THE BEGGARS

[1899.]

It is the beggars who possess the earth.
Kings on their throne have but the nar-
row girth

Of some poor known dominion; these
possess

All the unknown, and that vast happiness

Of the uncertainty of human things.

Wandering on eternal wanderings,
They know the world; and, tasting but the
bread

Of charity, know man; and, strangely led
By some vague, certain, and appointed
hand,

Know fate; and, being lonely, understand
Some little of the thing without a name
That sits by the roadside and talks with
them,

When they are silent; for the soul is shy
If more than its own shadow loiter by.

They and the birds are old acquaintances,
Knowing the dawn together; theirs it is
To settle on the dusty land like crows,
The ragged vagabonds of the air; who
knows

How they too shall be fed, day after day,
And surer than the birds, for are not they
The prodigal sons of God, our piteous
Aliens, outcast and accusing us?

Do they not ask of us their own, and wait,
Humbly, among the dogs about the gate,
While we are feasting? They will wait
till night:

Who shall wait longer?

Dim, shadowy, white,
The highway calls; they follow till it ends,
And all the way they walk among their
friends,

Sun, wind, and rain, their tearful sister
rain,

Their brother wind. Forest and hill and
plain

Know them and are forgotten. Grey and
old,

Their feet begin to linger, brown arms
fold

The heavy peace of earth about their
heart,

And soon, and without trouble, they depart
On the last journey.

As the beggar lies,
With naked face, remembering the skies,
I think he only wonders: Shall I find
A good road still, a hayrick to my mind,
A tavern now and then upon the road?
He has been earth's guest, he goes; the
old abode

Drops to the old horizon, and the day
Is over, and the dark is on the way.

DIVISIONS ON A GROUND—NO. II

[1899.]

THE sorrowful, who have loved, I pity not;
But those, not having loved, who do rejoice
To have escaped the cruelty of love,
I pity, as I pity the unborn.

Love is, indeed, as life is, full of care,
The tyrant of the soul, the death of peace

Rash father and blind parricide of joy;
And it were better never to have been,
If slothful ease, calm hours, are all of life,
Than to have chosen such a bedfellow.
Yet, if not rest, but rapture, and to attain
The wisdom that is silence in the stars
When the great morning-song is quieted,
Be more of life than these, and worth the
pain

Of living, then choose love, although he
bring

Mountainous griefs, griefs that have made
men mad.

Be sorrowful, all ye that have not loved,
Bow down, be sorrowful exceedingly,
Cover your heads from the embracing air,
And from the eye of the sun, lest ye be
shamed;

Earth would be naked of you; ye have
known

Only to hide from living; life rejects
The burden of your unaccompanied days.
This is of all things saddest in the world,
Not that men love, not that men die for
love,

But that they dare be cowards of their joy,
Even unto death; who, dying without love,
Drop into narrow graves to shiver there
Among the winds of time, till time's last
wind

Cleanse off the poor, lonely, and finite dust
From earth made ready for eternity.

DIVISIONS ON A GROUND.—NO. III

[1899.]

LET me hear music, for I am not sad,
But half in love with sadness. To dream
so

And dream, and so forget the dream, and
so

Dream I am dreaming! This old little
voice,

Which pants and flutters in the clavichord,
Has the bird's wings in it, and women's
tears,

The dust has drunken long ago, and sighs
As of a voiceless crying of old love
That died and never spoke; and then the
soul

Of one who sought for wisdom; and these
cry

Out of the disappointment of the grave.
And something, in the old and little voice,

Calls from so farther off than far away,
I tremble, hearing it, lest it draw me forth,

This flickering self, desiring to be gone,
Into the boundless and abrupt abyss

Whereat begins infinity; and there
This flickering self wander eternally

Among the soulless, uncreated winds
Which storm against the barriers of the

world.

But most I hear the pleading and sad voice
Of beauty, sad because it cannot speak
Out of harsh stones and out of evil noise,
And out of thwarted faces, and the gleam
Of things corrupted, and all ruinous things.
This is the voice that cries, and would be
heard,

And can but speak in music. Venerable
And ageless beauty of the world, whose
breath

Is life in all things, I have seen your form
In cloud, and grass, and wave, and glory
of man,

Flawless, but I have heard your very voice
Here only, here only human, and here sad
Only of all your voices upon earth.

TO NIGHT

[1899.]

I HAVE loved wind and light,
And the bright sea,
But, holy and most secret Night,
Not as I love and have loved thee.

God, like all highest things,
Hides light in shade,
And in the night his visitings
To sleep and dreams are clearliest made.

Love, that knows all things well,
Loves the night best;
Joys whereof daylight dares not tell
Are his, and the diviner rest.

And Life, whom day shows plain
His prison-bars,
Feels the close walls and the hard chain
Fade when the darkness brings the stars.

OPALS

[1899.]

My soul is like this cloudy, flaming opal
ring.

The fields of earth are in it, green and
glimmering,

The waves of the blue sky, night's purple
flower of noon,

The vanishing cold scintillations of the
moon,

And the red heart that is a flame within a
flame.

And as the opal dies, and is reborn the
same,

And all the fire that is its life-blood seems
to dart

Through the veined variable intricacies of
its heart,

And ever wandering ever wanders back
again,

So must my swift soul constant to itself
remain,

Opal, have I not been as variable as you?

But, cloudy opal flaming green and red and blue,
Are you not ever constant in your varying,
Even as my soul, O captive opal of my ring?

SEPTEMBER IDYL: IN THE HAM-MOCK: CHAMÉANE

[1899.]

A sky of green and gold, tremulous, delicate,
Starred with pale blue, and bright with little voices; wind
Lifting the golden outer fringe, autumn has thinned;
A yellow leaf drops rustling, and another: wait,
The leaves begin to whisper, and the voices cease:
I hear the silence; but a voice flutters again,
A little, fluting voice, soft, piercing, as the rain;
I close my eyes, and all my body sways with peace.
Delicate, tremulous, seen under eyelids closed,
The sky of green and gold sways over me, and seems
To fill the languid soul with the desire of dreams;
But the sky fades, and only inner eyelids, rosed
With filtered sunlight falling, shadow as they pass
Not even dreams; until a trailing hand perceives,
Sudden, the earth again, in the crisp touch of leaves,
And the arresting slender fingers of the grass.

WIND ON THE SEA

[1899.]

THE loneliness of the sea is in my heart,
And the wind is not more lonely than this grey mind.
I have thought far thoughts, I have loved,
I have loved, and I find
Love gone, thought weary, and I, alas, left behind.

The loneliness of my heart is in the sea,
And my mind is not more lonely than this grey wind.

Who shall stay the feet of the sea, or bind
The wings of the wind? only the feet of mankind

Grow old in the place of their sorrow, and bitter is the heart

That may not wander as the wind or return as the sea.

THE LOOM OF DREAMS

[1901.]

I BROIDER the world upon a loom,
I broider with dreams my tapestry;
Here in a little lonely room
I am master of earth and sea,
And the planets come to me.

I broider my life into the frame,
I broider my love, thread upon thread;
The world goes by with its glory and shame,
Crowns are bartered and blood is shed;
I sit and broider my dreams instead.

And the only world is the world of my dreams,
And my weaving the only happiness;
For what is the world but what it seems?
And who knows but that God, beyond our guess,
Sits weaving worlds out of loneliness.

THE REGRET

[1901.]

It seems to me, dearest, if you were dead,
And thought returned to me after the tears,
The hopeless first oblivious tears, were shed,

That this would be the bitterest, not that I
Had lost for all sad hours of all my years
The joys enjoyed and happy hours gone by;

Ah no, but that while we had time to live
And love before the coming of the night,
Yet knew the hours of daylight fugitive,
Proud as a child who will not what he would,

Sometimes I did not love you as I might.
Sometimes you did not love me when you could.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

(1865—)

THE INDIAN UPON GOD

[1886]

I PASSED along the water's edge below the humid trees,
My spirit rocked in evening light, the rushes round my knees,
My spirit rocked in sleep and sighs; and saw the moorfowl pace
All dripping on a grassy slope, and saw them cease to chase
Each other round in circles, and heard the eldest speak:
Who holds the world between His bill and made us strong or weak
Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond the sky.
The rains are from His dripping wing, the moonbeams from his eye.
I passed a little further on and heard a lotus talk:
Who made the world and ruleth it, He hangeth on a stalk,
For I am in His image made, and all this tinkling tide
Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals wide.
A little way within the gloom a roebuck raised his eyes
Brimful of starlight, and he said: *The Stamper of the Skies,*
He is a gentle roebuck; for how else, I pray, could he
Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing like me?
I passed a little further on and heard a peacock say:
Who made the grass and made the worms and made my feathers gay,
He is a monstrous peacock, and He waveth all the night
His languid tail above us, lit with myriad spots of light.

THE ROSE OF BATTLE

[1892.]

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!
The tall thought-woven sails, that flap unfurled
Above the tide of hours, trouble the air,
And God's bell buoyed to be the water's care;
While hushed from fear, or loud with hope, a band
With blown, spray-dabbled hair gather at hand.

Turn it you may from battles never done,
I call, as they go by me one by one,
Danger no refuge holds, and war no peace,
For him who hears love sing and never cease,
Beside her clean-swept hearth, her quiet shade:
But gather all for whom no love hath made
A woven silence; or but came to cast
A song into the air, and singing past
To smile on the pale dawn; and gather you
Who have sought more than is in rain or dew
Or in the sun and moon, or on the earth,
Or sighs amid the wandering, starry mirth,
Or comes in laughter from the sea's sad lips;
And wage God's battles in the long gray ships.
The sad, the lonely, the insatiable,
To these old Night shall all her mystery tell;
God's bell has claimed them by the little cry
Of their sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!
You, too, have come where the dim tides are hurled
Upon the wharves of sorrow, and heard ring
The bell that calls us on; the sweet far thing.
Beauty grown sad with its eternity
Made you of us, and of the dim gray sea.
Our long ships loose thought-woven sails and wait,
For God has bid them share an equal fate;
And when at last defeated in His wars,
They have gone down under the same white stars,
We shall no longer hear the little cry
Of our sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

[1890.]

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for
 peace comes dropping slow,
 Dropping from the veils of the morning
 to where the cricket sings;
 There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon
 a purple glow,
 And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night
 and day
 I hear lake water lapping with low
 sounds by the shore;
 While I stand on the roadway or on the
 pavement gray,
 I hear it in the deep heart's core.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

[1892.]

WHEN you are old and gray and full of
 sleep,
 And nodding by the fire, take down this
 book,
 And slowly read, and dream of the soft
 look
 Your eyes had once, and of their shadows
 deep;

How many loved your moments of glad
 grace,
 And loved your beauty with love false or
 true;
 But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
 And loved the sorrows of your changing
 face.

And bending down beside the glowing bars
 Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled
 And paced upon the mountains overhead
 And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

THE HOSTING OF THE SIDHE

[1892.]

THE host is riding from Knockarea
 And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;
 Caoite tossing his burning hair
 And Niamh calling *Away, come away:*
Empty your heart of its mortal dream.
The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,
Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a-
gleam,
Our arms are waving, our lips are apart;
And if any gaze on our rushing band,
We come between him and the deed of his
hand,
We come between him and the hope of his
heart.

The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,
 And where is there hope or deed as fair?
 Caoite tossing his burning hair,
 And Niamh calling, *Away, come away.*

THE LOVER TELLS OF THE ROSE IN HIS HEART

[1892.]

ALL things uncomely and broken, all things
 worn out and old,
 The cry of a child by the roadway, the
 creak of a lumbering cart,
 The heavy steps of the ploughman, splash-
 ing the wintry mould,
 Are wronging your image that blossoms a
 rose in the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong
 too great to be told;
 I hunger to build them anew and sit on a
 green knoll apart,
 With the earth and the sky and the water,
 remade, like a casket of gold
 For my dreams of your image that blos-
 soms a rose in the deeps of my heart.

HE REMEMBERS FORGOTTEN BEAUTY

[1890.]

WHEN my arms wrap you round I press
 My heart upon the loveliness
 That has long faded from the world;
 The jewelled crowns that kings have
 hurled
 In shadowy pools, when armies fled;
 The love-tales wrought with silken thread
 By dreaming ladies upon cloth
 That has made fat the murderous moth;
 The roses that of old time were
 Woven by ladies in their hair,
 The dew-cold lilies ladies bore
 Through many a sacred corridor
 Where such gray clouds of incense rose
 That only gods' eyes did not close;
 For that pale breast and lingering hand
 Come from a more dream-heavy land,
 A more dream-heavy hour than this;
 And when you sigh from kiss to kiss
 I hear white Beauty sighing, too,
 For hours when all must fade like dew
 But flame on flame, deep under deep,
 Throne over throne, where in half sleep
 Their swords upon their iron knees
 Brood her high lonely mysteries.

THE SECRET ROSE

[1897.]

FAR off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,
 Enfold me in my hour of hours; where
 those
 Who sought thee in the Holy Sepulchre,
 Or in the wine vat, dwell beyond the stir
 And tumult of defeated dreams; and deep
 Among pale eyelids, heavy with the sleep

Men have named beauty. Thy great leaves
 enfold
 The ancient beards, the helms of ruby and
 gold
 Of the crowned Magi; and the king whose
 eyes
 Saw the Pierced Hands and Rood of elder
 rise
 In druid vapour and make the torches dim;
 Till vain frenzy awoke and he died; and
 him
 Who met Fand walking among flaming
 dew
 By a gray shore where the wind never blew,
 And lost the world and Emer for a kiss;
 And him who drove the gods out of their
 liss,
 And till a hundred morns had flowered red,
 Feasted and wept the barrows of his dead;
 And the proud dreaming king who flung
 the crown
 And sorrow away, and calling bard and
 clown
 Dwelt among wine-stained wanderers in
 deep woods;
 And him who sold tillage, and house, and
 goods,
 And sought through lands and islands
 numberless years,
 Until he found with laughter and with
 tears,
 A woman, of so shining loveliness,
 That men threshed corn at midnight by a
 tress,
 A little stolen tress. I, too, await
 The hour of thy great wind of love and
 hate.
 When shall the stars be blown about the
 sky,
 Like the sparks blown out of a smithy,
 and die?
 Surely thine hour has come, thy great wind
 blows,
 Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose?

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

[1894.]

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

Maurteen Bruin.
 Shawn Bruin.
 Father Hart.
 Bridget Bruin.
 Maire Bruin.
 A Faery Child.

The scene is laid in the Barony of Kilmacowen in the county of Sligo, and the characters are supposed to speak in Gaelic. They wear the costume of a century ago.

The kitchen of MAURTEEN BRUIN'S house. An open grate with a turf fire is at the left side of the room, with a table in front of it. There is a door leading to the open air at the back, and another door a little to its left, leading into an inner room. There is a window,

a settle, and a large dresser on the right side of the room, and a great bowl of primroses on the sill of the window. MAURTEEN BRUIN, FATHER HART, and BRIDGET BRUIN are sitting at the table. SHAWN BRUIN is setting the table for supper. MAIRE BRUIN sits on the settle reading a yellow manuscript.

BRIDGET BRUIN

BECAUSE I bade her go and feed the calves,
 She took that old book down out of the
 thatch
 And has been doubled over it all day.
 We would be deafened by her groans and
 moans
 Had she to work as some do, Father Hart,
 Get up at dawn like me, and mend and
 scour;
 Or ride abroad in the boisterous night like
 you,
 The pyx and blessed bread under your arm.

SHAWN BRUIN

You are too cross.

BRIDGET BRUIN

The young side with the young.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

She quarrels with my wife a bit at times,
 And is too deep just now in the old book;
 But do not blame her greatly; she will grow
 As quiet as a puff-ball in a tree
 When but the moons of marriage dawn
 and die
 For half a score of times.

FATHER HART

Their hearts are wild
 As be the hearts of birds, till children come.

BRIDGET BRUIN

She would not mind the griddle, milk the
 cow,
 Or even lay the knives and spread the cloth.

FATHER HART

I never saw her read a book before:
 What may it be?

MAURTEEN BRUIN

I do not rightly know:
 It has been in the thatch for fifty years.
 My father told me my grandfather wrote
 it,
 Killed a red heifer and bound it with the
 hide.
 But draw your chair this way—supper is
 spread;
 And little good he got out of the book,
 Because it filled his house with roaming
 bards,
 And roaming ballad-makers and the like,
 And wasted all his goods.—Here is the
 wine;

The griddle bread's beside you, Father Hart.
Colleen, what have you got there in the
book

That you must leave the bread to cool?

Had I,

Or had my father, read or written books
There were no stocking full of silver and
gold

To come, when I am dead, to Shawn and
you.

FATHER HART

You should not fill your head with foolish
dreams.

What are you reading?

MAIRE BRUIN

How a Princess Edain,
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May eve like this,
And followed, half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the land of faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and
grave,

Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of
tongue;

And she is still there, busied with a dance,
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
Or where stars walk upon a mountain top.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Persuade the colleen to put by the book:
My grandfather would mutter just such
things,

And he was no judge of a dog or horse,
And any idle boy could blarney him.
Just speak your mind.

FATHER HART

Put it away, my colleen.

God spreads the heavens above us like
great wings,

And gives a little round of deeds and days,
And then come the wrecked angels and set
snares,

And bait them with light hopes and heavy
dreams,

Until the heart is puffed with pride and
goes,

Half shuddering and half joyous, from
God's peace;

And it was some wrecked angel, blind
from tears,

Who flattered Edain's heart with merry
words.

My colleen, I have seen some other girls
Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
And they grew like their neighbours and
were glad

In minding children, working at the churn,
And gossiping of weddings and of wakes;
For life moves out of a red flare of dreams
Into a common light of common hours,
Until old age bring the red flare again.

SHAWN BRUIN

Yet do not blame her greatly, Father Hart,
For she is dull while I am in the fields,
And mother's tongue were harder still to
bear,

But for her fancies: this is May Eve too,
When the good people post about the world,
And surely one may think of them to-night.
Maire, have you the primroses to fling
Before the door to make a golden path
For them to bring good luck into the house?
Remember, they may steal new-married
brides

After the fall of twilight on May Eve.

[MAIRE BRUIN goes over to the window
and takes flowers from the bowl and
strews them outside the door.

FATHER HART

You do well, daughter, because God permits
Great power to the good people on May
Eve.

SHAWN BRUIN

They can work all their will with prim-
roses —

Change them to golden money, or little
flames

To burn up those who do them any wrong.

MAIRE BRUIN [*in a dreamy voice*]

I had no sooner flung them by the door
Than the wind cried and hurried them
away;

And then a child came running in the wind
And caught them in her hands and fondled
them:

Her dress was green: her hair was of red
gold;

Her face was pale as water before dawn.

FATHER HART

Whose child can this be?

MAURTEEN BRUIN

No one's child at all.

She often dreams that some one has gone
by

When there was nothing but a puff of
wind.

MAIRE BRUIN

They will not bring good luck into the
house,

For they have blown the primroses away;
Yet I am glad that I was courteous to
them.

For are not they, likewise, children of God?

FATHER HART

Colleen, they are the children of the Fiend,
And they have power until the end of Time,
When God shall fight with them a great
pitched battle
And hack them into pieces.

MAIRE BRUIN

He will smile,
Father, perhaps, and open His great door,
And call the pretty and kind into His house.

FATHER HART

Did but the lawless angels see that door,
They would fall, slain by everlasting peace;
And when such angels knock upon our
doors
Who goes with them must drive through
the same storm.

*[A knock at the door. MAIRE BRUIN
opens it and then goes to the dresser
and fills a porringer with milk and
hands it through the door and takes it
back empty and closes the door.]*

MAIRE BRUIN

A little queer old woman cloaked in green,
Who came to beg a porringer of milk.

BRIDGET BRUIN

The good people go asking milk and fire
Upon May Eve.—Woe upon that house
that gives,
For they have power upon it for a year.
I knew you would bring evil on the house.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Who was she?

MAIRE BRUIN

Both the tongue and face
were strange.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Some strangers came last week to Clover
Hill;
She must be one of them.

BRIDGET BRUIN

I am afraid.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

The priest will keep all harm out of the
house.

FATHER HART

The Cross will keep all harm out of the
house
While it hangs there.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Come, sit beside me, colleen,
And put away your dreams of discontent,
For I would have you light up my last days
Like a bright torch of pine, and when I die
I will make you the wealthiest hereabout;
For hid away where nobody can find
I have a stocking full of silver and gold.

BRIDGET BRUIN

You are the fool of every pretty face,
And I must pinch and pare that my son's
wife
May have all kinds of ribbons for her head.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!
The butter is by your elbow, Father Hart.
My colleen, have not Fate and Time and
Change
Done well for me and for old Bridget
there?

We have a hundred acres of good land,
And sit beside each other at the fire,
The wise priest of our parish to our right,
And you and our dear son to left of us.
To sit beside the board and drink good
wine
And watch the turf smoke coiling from the
fire

And feel content and wisdom in your heart,
This is the best of life; when we are young
We long to tread a way none trod before,
But find the excellent old way through love
And through the care of children to the
hour
For bidding Fate and Time and Change
good-bye.

*[A knock at the door. MAIRE BRUIN
opens it and then takes a sod of turf
out of the hearth in the tongs and
passes it through the door and closes
the door and remains standing by it.]*

MAIRE BRUIN

A little queer old man in a green coat,
Who asked a burning sod to light his pipe.

BRIDGET BRUIN

You have now given milk and fire, and
brought,
For all you know, evil upon the house.
Before you married you were idle and fine,
And went about with ribbons on your head;
And now you are a good-for-nothing wife.

SHAWN BRUIN

Be quiet, mother!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

You are much too cross!

MAIRE BRUIN

What do I care if I have given this house,
Where I must hear all day a bitter tongue,
Into the power of faeries!

BRIDGET BRUIN

You know well
How calling the good people by that name
Or talking of them overmuch at all
May bring all kinds of evil on the house.

MAIRE BRUIN

Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
 Let me have all the freedom I have lost—
 Work when I will and idle when I will!
 Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
 For I would ride with you upon the wind,
 Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,
 And dance upon the mountains like a flame!

FATHER HART

You cannot know the meaning of your words!

MAIRE BRUIN

Father, I am right weary of four tongues:
 A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,
 A tongue that is too godly and too grave,
 A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
 And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love,
 Of drowsy love and my captivity.

[SHAWN BRUIN comes over to her and leads her to the settle.

SHAWN BRUIN

Do not blame me: I often lie awake
 Thinking that all things trouble your bright head—

How beautiful it is—such broad pale brows

Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
 Sit down beside me here—these are too old,
 And have forgotten they were ever young.

MAIRE BRUIN

O, you are the great door-post of this house,

And I the red nasturtium climbing up.

[She takes SHAWN's hand but looks shyly at the priest and lets it go.

FATHER HART

Good daughter, take his hand—by love alone

God binds us to Himself and to the hearth
 And shuts us from the waste beyond His peace,

From maddening freedom and bewildering light.

SHAWN BRUIN

Would that the world were mine to give it you,

With every quiet hearth and barren waste,
 The maddening freedom of its woods and tides,

And the bewildering light upon its hills.

MAIRE BRUIN

Then I would take and break it in my hands
 To see you smile watching it crumble away.

SHAWN BRUIN

Then I would mould a world of fire and dew

With no one bitter, grave, or over wise,
 And nothing marred or old to do you wrong.

And crowd the enraptured quiet of the sky
 With candles burning to your lonely face.

MAIRE BRUIN

Your looks are all the candles that I need.

SHAWN BRUIN

Once a fly dancing in a beam o' the sun,
 Or the light wind blowing out of the dawn,
 Could fill your heart with dreams none other knew,

But now the indissoluble sacrament
 Has mixed your heart that was most proud and cold

With my warm heart for ever; and sun and moon,

Must fade and heaven be rolled up like a scroll;

But your white spirit still walk by my spirit.

[A VOICE sings in the distance.

MAIRE BRUIN

Did you hear something call? O, guard me close,

Because I have said wicked things to-night;
 And seen a pale-faced child with red-gold hair,

And longed to dance upon the winds with her.

A VOICE [close to the door]

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,

The wind blows over the lonely of heart
 And the lonely of heart is withered away

While the faeries dance in a place apart,
 Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,

Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
 For they hear the wind laugh, and murmur and sing

Of a land where even the old are fair,
 And even the wise are merry of tongue;

But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
 'When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,

The lonely of heart is withered away!'

MAURTEEN BRUIN

I am right happy, and would make all els
 Be happy too. I hear a child outside,
 And will go bring her in out of the cold.

[He opens the door. A CHILD dressed in pale green and with red-gold hair comes into the house.

THE CHILD

I tire of winds and waters and pale lights

MAURTEEN BRUIN

You are most welcome. It is cold out there.

Who'd think to face such cold on a May Eve?

THE CHILD

And when I tire of this warm little house,
There is one here who must away, away,
To where the woods, the stars, and the
white streams

Are holding a continual festival.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

O listen to her dreamy and strange talk
Come to the fire.

THE CHILD

I will sit upon your knee.

For I have run from where the winds are
born,

And long to rest my feet a little while.

[She sits upon his knee.]

BRIDGET BRUIN

How pretty you are!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Your hair is wet with dew!

BRIDGET BRUIN

will warm your chilly feet.

[She takes the CHILD's feet in her hands.]

MAURTEEN BRUIN

You must have come

a long, long way, for I have never seen
your pretty face, and must be tired and
hungry;

Here is some bread and wine.

THE CHILD

The wine is bitter.

Old mother, have you no sweet food for
me?

BRIDGET BRUIN

have some honey!

[She goes into the next room.]

MAURTEEN BRUIN

You are a dear child.

The mother was quite cross before you
came.

*[BRIDGET returns with the honey and goes
to the window and puts a pane of glass
aside.]*

BRIDGET BRUIN

He is the little of gentle people, look
at her white hands and at her pretty dress.

I have brought you some new milk, the
best I have.

And I will not let the fire be warm.

For things will break the poor little fire in
Wooden never please a little heart like
you.

THE CHILD

Old mother, my old mother, the grass grows
brighter above while you grow up the tree,
And evening finds you spreading the white
cloth.

The young may be in bed and dream and
hope.

But you work on because your heart is old.

BRIDGET BRUIN

The young are idle.

THE CHILD

Old father, you are wise.

And all the years have gathered in your
heart.

To whisper of the wonders that are gone.
The young must sigh through many a dream
and hope.

But you are wise because your heart is old.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

O, who would think to find so young a
child.

Loving old age and wisdom!

[BRIDGET gives her more bread and honey.]

THE CHILD

No more, mother.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

What a small bite! the milk is ready now.
What a small sip!

THE CHILD

Put on my shoes, old mother.

For I would like to dance when I have
eaten.

The reeds are dancing by Cuckoo lake.

And I would like to dance with the reeds
And the white water has danced from
stone to stone.

*[BRIDGET having put on her shoes, she
gets off the old man's shoes and is
about to dance, but suddenly sees the
cracks and shakes and closes her
eyes.]*

What a thin old thing in the dark corner!

BRIDGET BRUIN

You cannot dance here tonight, poor
child.

Put on your Evening Gown!

THE CHILD

What a noisy!

BRIDGET BRUIN

I have begun to be afraid again!

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

That would be wickedness!

BRIDGET BRUIN

That would be sacrilege!

THE CHILD

The tortured thing!

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Her parents are to blame.

FATHER HART

That is the image of the Son of God.

[The CHILD puts her arms around his neck and kisses him.]

THE CHILD

Hide it away! Hide it away!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

No! no!

FATHER HART

Because you are so young and little a child
I will go take it down.

THE CHILD

Hide it away,
And cover it out of sight and out of mind.[FATHER HART takes it down and carries
it towards the inner room.]

FATHER HART

Since you have come into this barony
I will instruct you in our blessed faith:
Being a clever child you will soon learn.

[To the others.]

We must be tender with all budding things,
Our Maker let no thought of Calvary
Trouble the morning stars in their first
song.

[Puts the crucifix in the inner room.]

THE CHILD

Here is level ground for dancing. I will
dance.The wind is blowing on the waving reeds,
The wind is blowing on the heart of man.

[She dances, swaying about like the reeds.]

MAIRE [to SHAWN BRUIN.]

Just now when she came near I thought I
heardOther small steps beating upon the floor,
And a faint music blowing in the wind —
Invisible pipes giving her feet the time.

SHAWN BRUIN

I heard no steps but hers.

MAIRE BRUIN

Look to the bolt!
Because the unholy powers are abroad.

MAURTEEN BRUIN [to the CHILD.]

Come over here, and if you promise me
Not to talk wickedly of holy things
I will give you something.

THE CHILD

Bring it me, old father!

[MAURTEEN BRUIN goes into the next
room.]

FATHER HART

I will have queen cakes when you come to
me![MAURTEEN BRUIN returns and lays a
piece of money on the table. The
CHILD makes a gesture of refusal.]

MAURTEEN BRUIN

It will buy lots of toys; see how it glitters!

THE CHILD

Come, tell me, do you love me?

MAURTEEN BRUIN

I love you!

THE CHILD

Ah! but you love this fireside!

FATHER HART

I love you.

THE CHILD

But you love Him above.

BRIDGET BRUIN

She is blaspheming.

THE CHILD [to MAIRE]

And do you love me?

MAIRE BRUIN

I — I do not know.

THE CHILD

You love that great tall fellow over there:
Yet I could make you ride upon the winds,
Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame!

MAIRE BRUIN

Queen of the Angels and kind Saints, de-
fend us!Some dreadful fate has fallen: a while ago
The wind cried out and took the primroses.

And she ran by me laughing in the wind,
And I gave milk and fire, and she came in
And made you hide the blessed crucifix.

FATHER HART

You fear because of her wild, pretty prattle;

She knows no better.

[To the CHILD] Child, how old are you?

THE CHILD

When winter sleep is abroad my hair
grows thin,

My feet unsteady. When the leaves
awaken

My mother carries me in her golden arms.
I will soon put on my womanhood and

marry

The spirits of the wood and water, but
who can tell

When I was born for the first time? I
think

I am much older than the eagle cock
That blinks and blinks on Ballygawley Hill,
And he is the oldest thing under the moon.

FATHER HART

She is of the faery people.

THE CHILD

I am Brig's daughter.

I sent my messengers for milk and fire,
And then I heard one call to me and came.

[They all except MAIRE BRUIN gather
about the priest for protection. MAIRE
BRUIN stays on the settle in a stupor
of terror. The CHILD takes primroses
from the great bowl and begins to
strew them between herself and the
priest and about MAIRE BRUIN. During
the following dialogue SHAWN
BRUIN goes more than once to the
brink of the primroses, but shrinks back
to the others timidly.]

FATHER HART

I will confront this mighty spirit alone.

[They cling to him and hold him back.]

THE CHILD [while she strews the primroses]

No one whose heart is heavy with human
tears

Can cross these little cressets of the wood.

FATHER HART

Be not afraid, the Father is with us,
And all the nine angelic hierarchies,
The Holy Martyrs and the Innocents,
The adoring Magi in their coats of mail,
And He who died and rose on the third
day,
And Mary with her seven times wounded
heart.

[The CHILD ceases strewing the primroses, and kneels upon the settle beside MAIRE and puts her arms about her neck.]

Cry, daughter, to the Angels and Saints.

THE CHILD

You shall go with me, newly-married bride,
And gaze upon a merrier multitude:

White-armed Nuala and Aengus of the
birds,

And Feacra of the hurtling foam, and him
Who is the ruler of the western host,

Finvarra, and their Land of Heart's Desire,
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,

But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.
I kiss you and the world begins to fade.

FATHER HART

Daughter, I call you unto home and love!

THE CHILD

Stay, and come with me, newly-married
bride,

For, if you hear him, you grow like the
rest:

Bear children, cook, be mindful of the
churn,

And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,
And sit at last there, old and bitter of

tongue,
Watching the white stars war upon your
hopes.

FATHER HART

Daughter, I point you out the way to
heaven.

THE CHILD

But I can lead you, newly-married bride,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,
And where kind tongues bring no captivity,
For we are only true to the far lights
We follow singing, over valley and hill.

FATHER HART

By the dear name of the one crucified,
I bid you, Maire Bruin, come to me.

THE CHILD

I keep you in the name of your own heart!

[She leaves the settle, and stooping takes
up a mass of primroses and kisses them.
We have great power to-night, dear golden
folk,

For he took down and hid the crucifix.

And my invisible brethren fill the house;

I hear their footsteps going up and down.

O, they shall soon rule all the hearts of
men

And own all lands; last night they merrily
danced

About his chapel belfrey! [*To MAIRE.*]
Come away,
I hear my brethren bidding us away!

FATHER HART
I will go fetch the crucifix again.
[*They hang about him in terror and prevent him from moving.*]

BRIDGET BRUIN
The enchanted flowers will kill us if you go.

MAURTEEN BRUIN
They turn the flowers to little twisted flames.

SHAWN BRUIN
The little twisted flames burn up the heart.

THE CHILD
I hear them crying, 'Newly married bride,
Come to the woods and waters and pale lights.'

MAIRE BRUIN
I will go with you.

FATHER HART
She is lost, alas!

THE CHILD [*standing by the door.*]
Then, follow: but the heavy body of clay,
And clinging mortal hope must fall from you;
For we who ride the winds, run on the waves,
And dance upon the mountains, are more light
Than dewdrops on the banners of the dawn.

MAIRE BRUIN
Then take my soul.
[*SHAWN BRUIN goes over to her.*]

SHAWN BRUIN
Beloved, do not leave me!
What will my life be if you go with her?
Remember when I met you by the well
And took your hand in mine and spoke of love.

MAIRE BRUIN
Dear face! Dear voice!

THE CHILD
Come, newly-married bride!

MAIRE BRUIN
I always loved her world — and yet — and yet —
[*Sinks into his arms.*]

THE CHILD [*from the door*]
White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird!

MAIRE BRUIN
She calls my soul!

THE CHILD
Come with me, little bird!

MAIRE BRUIN
I can hear songs and dancing!

SHAWN BRUIN
Stay with me!

MAIRE BRUIN
I think that I would stay — and yet — and yet —

THE CHILD
White bird!
Come, little bird with crest of gold!

MAIRE BRUIN [*very softly*].
And yet —

THE CHILD
Come, little bird with silver feet!
[*MAIRE dies and the CHILD goes.*]

SHAWN BRUIN
She is dead!

FATHER HART
Thus do the evil spirits snatch their prey
Almost out of the very hand of God;
And day by day their power is more and more,
And men and women leave old paths, for pride
Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart.

A VOICE [*singing outside.*]
The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away,
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
'When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,
The lonely of heart is withered away!'

[*The song is taken up by many voices, who sing loudly, as if in triumph. Some of the voices seem to come from within the house.*]

FRANCIS THOMPSON

[1859-1907.]

DAISY

[1893.]

WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And, with the sea-breeze hand in hand,
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day!

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed
face!

She gave me tokens three:—
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
A still word,—strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For, standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end:
Their scent survives their close,
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose!

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way:—
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
She went, and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain,
And perish in our own.

THE POPPY

TO MONICA

[1893.]

SUMMER set lip to earth's bosom bare,
And left the flushed print in a poppy there:
Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping
flame.

With burnt mouth, red like a lion's, it
drank
The blood of the sun as he slaughtered
sank,
And dipped its cup in the purpurate shine
When the eastern conduits ran with wine;

Till it grew lethargied with fierce bliss,
And hot as a swinked gipsy is,
And drowsed in sleepy savageries,
With mouth wide a-pout for a sultry kiss.

A child and man paced side by side,
Treading the skirts of eventide;
But between the clasp of his hand and hers
Lay, felt not, twenty withered years.

She turned, with the rout of her dusk
South hair,
And saw the sleeping gipsy there;
And snatched and snapped it in swift child's
whim,

With—"Keep it, long as you live!"—to him.
And his smile, as nymphs from their laving
meres,
Trembled up from a bath of tears;

And joy, like a mew sea-rocked apart,
Tossed on the wave of his troubled heart.

For *he* saw what she did not see,
That—as kindled by its own fervency—
The verge shrivelled inward smoulderingly:

And suddenly 'twixt his hand and hers
He knew the twenty withered years—
No flower; but twenty shrivelled years.

"Was never such thing until this hour,"
Low to his heart he said; "the flower
Of sleep brings waking to me,
And of oblivion, memory.

"Was never this thing to me," he said,
"Though with bruised poppies my feet are
red!"

And again to his own heart very low:
"O child! I love, for I love and know;

"But you, who love nor know at all
The diverse chambers in Love's guest-hall,
Where some rise early, few sit long:
In how differing accents hear the throng
His great Pentecostal tongue;

"Who know not love from amity,
Nor my reported self from me;
A fair fit gift is this, meseems,
You give—this withering flower of dreams.

"O frankly fickle, and fickle true,
Do you know what the days will do to you?
To your Love and you what the days will
do,
O frankly fickle, and fickle true?

"You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or
days:
'Twill pass with the passing of my face.
But where *I* go, your face goes too,
To watch lest I play false to you.

"I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,
Knowing well when certain years are over
You vanish from me to another;
Yet I know, and love, like the foster-
mother.

"So, frankly fickle, and fickle true!
For my brief life-while I take from you
This token, fair and fit, meseems,
For me—this withering flower of dreams."

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its
head,
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread:
The goodly grain and the sun-flushed
sleeper
The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang 'mid men my needless head,
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:

The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper
Time shall reap; but after the reaper
The world shall glean of me, me the
sleeper!

Love, love! your flower of withered dream
In leaved rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time.

Love! I fall into the claws of Time:
But lasts within a leaved rhyme
All that the world of me esteems—
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.

THE MAKING OF VIOLA

[1893.]

I

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Twirl your wheel with silver din;
Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Spin a tress for Viola.

ANGELS

Spin, Queen Mary, a
Brown tress for Viola!

II

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Weave, hands angelical,
Weave a woof of flesh to pall—
Weave, hands angelical—
Flesh to pall our Viola.

ANGELS

Weave, singing brothers, a
Velvet flesh for Viola!

III

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-browned pools of Paradise—
Young Jesus, for the eyes,
For the eyes of Viola.

ANGELS

Tint, Prince Jesus, a
Duskèd eye for Viola!

IV

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Cast a star therein to drown,
Like a torch in cavern brown,
Sink a burning star to drown
Whelmed in eyes of Viola.

ANGELS

Lave, Prince Jesus, a
Star in eyes of Viola!

V

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Breathe, Lord Paraclete,
To a bubbled crystal meet —
Breathe, Lord Paraclete —
Crystal soul for Viola.

ANGELS

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a
Flashing soul for Viola!

VI

THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Child-angels, from your wings
Fall the roseal hoverings,
Child-angels, from your wings
On the cheeks of Viola.

ANGELS

Linger, rosy reflex, a
Quenchless stain, on Viola!

VII

ALL THINGS BEING ACCOMPLISHED, SAITH THE
FATHER OF HEAVEN :

Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
Bear her down on spyless wing,
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
With a sound of viola.

ANGELS

Music as her name is, a
Sweet sound of Viola!

VIII

Wheeling angels, past espial,
Danced her down with sound of viol;
Wheeling angels, past espial,
Descanting on "Viola."

ANGELS

Sing, in our footing, a
Lovely lilt of "Viola!"

IX

Baby smiled, mother wailed,
Earthward while the sweetling sailed;
Mother smiled, baby wailed,
When to earth came Viola.

AND HER ELDERS SHALL SAY :

So soon have we taught you a
Way to weep, poor Viola!

X

Smile, sweet baby, smile,
For you will have weeping-while;
Native in your Heaven is smile, —
But your weeping, Viola?

Whence your smiles, we know, but ah!
Whence your weeping, Viola? —
Our first gift to you is a
Gift of tears, my Viola!

EX ORE INFANTIUM

[1893.]

LITTLE JESUS, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,
And ask where all the angels were?

I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me —
Not an angel there to dress me!

Hadst Thou ever any toys, *a touch of Blue*
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in heaven with all
The angels, that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.
And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way —
When Thou wast so little, say,
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way?

So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),
And say: "O Father, I, Thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

SCALA JACOBI PORTAQUE
EBURNEA

[1895.]

HER soul from earth to Heaven lies,
Like the ladder of the vision,

Whereon go

To and fro,

In ascension and demission,
Star-flecked feet of Paradise.

Now she is drawn up from me,
All my angels, wet-eyed, tristful,
Gaze from great
Heaven's gate

Like pent children, very wistful,
That below a playmate see.

Dream-dispensing face of hers!
Ivory port which loosed upon me
Wings, I wist,
Whose amethyst
Trepidations have forgone me,—
Hesper's filmy traffickers!

BEFORE HER PORTRAIT IN YOUTH

[1895.]

As LOVERS, banished from their lady's face,
And hopeless of her grace,
Fashion a ghostly sweetness in its place,
Fondly adore

Some stealth-won cast attire she wore,
A kerchief, or a glove:

And at the lover's beck
Into the glove there fleets the hand,
Or at impetuous command
Up from the kerchief floats the virgin neck:

So I, in very lowlihead of love,—
Too shyly reverencing

To let one thought's light footfall smooth
Tread near the living, consecrated thing,—
Treasure me thy cast youth.

This outworn vesture, tenantless of thee,
Hath yet my knee,

For that, with show and semblance fair
Of the past Her

Who once the beautiful, discarded raiment
bare,

It cheateth me.

As gale to gale drifts breath
Of blossoms' death,

So dropping down the years from hour to
hour

This dead youth's scent is wafted me to-
day:

I sit, and from the fragrance dream the
flower.

So, then, she looked (I say);

And so her front sank down

Heavy beneath the poet's iron crown:

On her mouth museful sweet—

(Even as the twin lips meet)

Did thought and sadness greet:

Sighs

In those mournful eyes

So put on visibilities;

As viewless ether turns, in deep on deep,
to dyes.

Thus, long ago,

She kept her meditative paces slow
Through maiden meads, with wavèd shadow
and gleam

Of locks half-lifted on the winds of dream,

Till love up-caught her to his chariot's glow.
Yet, voluntary, happier Proserpine,

This drooping flower of youth thou lettest
fall

I, faring in the cockshut-light, astray,
Find on my 'lated way,

And stoop, and gather for memorial,
And lay it on my bosom, and make it mine.

To this, the all of love the stars allow me,
I dedicate and vow me.

I reach back through the days

A trothed hand to the dead the last trump
shall not raise.

The water-wraith that cries

From those eternal sorrows of thy pictured
eyes

Entwines and draws me down their sound-
less intricacies!

splendid of destiny of rhythm
his Proserpine
THE ROUND OF HEAVEN
[Composed 1891. — Published 1895.]

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the
days;

I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of
tears

I hid from Him, and under running laugh-
ter.

Up vistaed hopes I sped;

And shot, precipitated,

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, fol-
lowèd after.

But with unhurrying chase,

And unperturbèd pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

They beat—and a Voice beat

More instant than the Feet—

"All things betray thee, who betrayest
Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,

By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;

(For, though I knew His love Who fol-
lowèd,

Yet was I sore adread

Lest, having Him, I must have naught be-
side);

But, if one little casement parted wide,

The gust of His approach would clash it
to.

Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pur-
sue.

Across the margent of the world I fled,

And troubled the gold gateways of the
stars,

Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;

Fretted to dulcet jars

And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.

I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over

From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.

But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,

The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven

Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—

Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat —
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;

But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;

They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair

With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.

"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share

With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;

Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,

Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured dais,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice

Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."

So it was done:

I in their delicate fellowship was one —
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings

On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumed of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with — made them shapers

Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine —
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.

I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,

Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;

Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;

But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.

In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.

For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound I speak —
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;

Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me

The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.

Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noised Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet —

"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,

And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.

In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,

I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years —

My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.

My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,

Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.

Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist

I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?

Ah! must—

Designer infinite!—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou
canst limn with it?

My freshness spent its wavering shower i'
the dust;

And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down
ever

From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?

The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists con-
founds;

Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly
wash again.

But not ere him who summoneth

I first have seen, enwound

With glooming robes purpleal, cypress-
crowned;

His name I know, and what his trumpet
saith.

Whether man's heart or life it be which
yields

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;

That Voice is round me like a bursting
sea:

"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?

Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest
Me!

Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught"

(He said),

"And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—

Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not

How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My
arms.

All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at
home:

Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:

Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caress-
ingly?

"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!

Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest
Me."

TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

[*Henry Edward Manning, Died January, 1892.*]

[1895.]

I WILL not perturbate

Thy Paradisal state

With praise

Of thy dead days;

To the new-heavened say,—

"Spirit, thou wert fine clay":

This do,

Thy praise who knew.

Therefore my spirit clings

Heaven's porter by the wings,

And holds

Its gated golds

Apart, with thee to press

A private business;—

Whence,

Deign me audience.

Anchorite, who didst dwell

With all the world for cell,

My soul

Round me doth roll

A sequestration bare.

Too far alike we were,

Too far

Dissimilar.

For its burning fruitage I

Do climb the tree o' the sky;

Do prize

Some human eyes.

You smelt the Heaven-blossoms,

And all the sweet embosoms

The dear

Uranian year.

Those Eyes my weak gaze shuns,
Which to the suns are Suns,
Did
Not affray your lid.

The carpet was let down
(With golden moultings strown)
For you
Of the angels' blue.

But I, ex-Paradised,
The shoulder of your Christ
Find high
To lean thereby.

So flaps my helpless sail,
Bellying with neither gale,
Of Heaven
Nor Orcus even.

Life is coquetry
Of Death, which wearies me,
Too sure
Of the amour;

A tiring-room where I
Death's divers garments try,
Till fit
Some fashion sit.

It seemeth me too much
I do rehearse for such
A mean
And single scene.

The sandy glass hence bear—
Antique remembrancer;
My veins
Do spare its pains.

With secret sympathy
My thoughts repeat in me
Infirm
The turn o' the worm

Beneath my appointed sod;
The grave is in my blood;
I shake
To winds that take

Its grasses by the top;
The rains thereon that drop
Perturb
With drip acerb

My subtly answering soul;
The feet across its knoll
Do jar
Me from afar.

As sap foretastes the spring;
As Earth ere blossoming
Thrills
With far daffodils,

And feels her breast turn sweet
With the unconceived wheat;
So doth
My flesh foreloathe

The abhorred spring of Dis,
With seething presciences
Affirm
The preparate worm.

I have no thought that I,
When at the last I die,
Shall reach
To gain your speech.

But you, should that be so,
May very well, I know,
May well
To me in hell

With recognising eyes
Look from your Paradise—
"God bless
Thy hopelessness!"

Call, holy soul, O call
The hosts angelical,
And say,—
"See, far away

"Lies one I saw on earth;
One stricken from his birth
With curse
Of destinate verse.

"What place doth He ye serve
For such sad spirit reserve,—
Given,
In dark lieu of Heaven,

"The impitiable Dæmon,
Beauty, to adore and dream on,
To be
Perpetually

"Hers, but she never his?
He reapeth miseries;
Foreknows
His wages woes;

"He lives detachèd days;
He serveth not for praise;
For gold
He is not sold;

"Deaf is he to world's tongue;
He scorneth for his song
The loud
Shouts of the crowd;

"He asketh not world's eyes;
Not to world's ears he cries;
Saith,— 'These
Shut, if you please';

"He measureth world's pleasure,
World's ease, as Saints might measure;
For hire
Just love entire

"He asks, not grudging pain;
And knows his asking vain,
And cries —
'Love! Love!' and dies,

"In guerdon of long duty,
Unowned by Love or Beauty;
And goes —
Tell, tell, who knows!

"Aliens from Heaven's worth,
Fine kneads who nose i' the earth,
Do there
Reward prepare.

"But are *his* great desires
Food but for nether fires?
Ah me,
A mystery!

"Can it be his alone,
To find, when all is known,
That what
He solely sought

"Is lost, and thereto lost
All that its seeking cost?
That he
Must finally,

"Through sacrificial tears
And anchoretic years,
Tryst
With the sensualist?"

So ask; and if they tell
The secret terrible,
Good friend,
I pray thee send

Some high gold embassy
To teach my unripe age.
Tell!
Lest my feet walk hell.

ORIENT ODE

[1897.]

Lo, IN the sanctuaried East,
Day, a dedicated priest
In all his robes pontifical exprest,
Lifteth slowly, lifteth sweetly,
From out its Orient tabernacle drawn,
Yon orb'd sacrament confest
Which sprinkles benediction through the
dawn;

And when the grave procession's ceased,
The earth with due illustrious rite
Blessed, — ere the frail fingers featly
Of twilight, violet-cassocked acolyte,

His sacerdotal stoles unvest —
Sets, for high close of the mysterious feast,
The sun in august exposition meetly
Within the flaming monst'rance of the West.

*O salutaris hostia,
Quae coeli pandis ostium!*
Through breached darkness' rampart, a
Divine assaulter, art thou come!

God, whom none may live and mark,
Borne within thy radiant ark! —
While the Earth, a joyous David,
Dances before thee from the dawn to dark.
The moon, O leave, pale ruined Eve;
Behold her fair and greater daughter*
Offers to thee her fruitful water,
Which at thy first white *Ave* shall conceive!
Thy gazes do on simple her
Desirable allures confer;
What happy comelinesses rise
Beneath thy beautifying eyes!
Who was, indeed, at first a maid
Such as, with sighs, misgives she is not fair,
And secret views herself afraid,
Till flatteries sweet provoke the charms they
swear:

Yea, thy gazes, blissful lover,
Make the beauties they discover!
What dainty guiles and treacheries caught
From artful prompting of love's artless
thought
Her lowly loveliness teach her to adorn,
When thy plumes shiver against the con-
scious gates of morn!

And so the love which is thy dower,
Earth, though her first-frightened breast
Against the exigent boon protest,
(For she, poor maid, of her own power
Has nothing in herself, not even love,
But an unwitting void thereof),
Gives back to thee in sanctities of flower;
And holy odours do her bosom invest,
That sweeter grows for being prest:
Though dear recoil, the tremorous nurse of
joy,

From thine embrace still startles coy,
Till Phosphor lead, at thy returning hour,
The laughing captive from the wishing
West.

Nor the majestic heavens less
Thy formidable sweets approve,
Thy dreads and thy delights confess
That do draw, and that remove.
Thou as a lion roar'st, O Sun,
Upon thy satellites' vexed heels;
Before thy terrible hunt thy planets run;
Each in his frightened orbit wheels,
Each flies through inassuageable chase,
Since the hunt o' the world begun,
The puissant approaches of thy face,

* The Earth.

And yet thy radiant leash he feels.
 Since the hunt o' the world begun,
 Lashed with terror, leashed with longing,
 The mighty course is ever run;
 Pricked with terror, leashed with longing,
 Thy rein they love, and thy rebuke they
 shun.

Since the hunt o' the world began,
 With love that trembleth, fear that loveth,
 Thou join'st the woman to the man;
 And Life with Death
 In obscure nuptials moveth,
 Commingling alien, yet affined, breath.

Thou art the incarnated Light
 Whose Sire is aboriginal, and beyond
 Death and resurgence of our day and night;
 From him is thy vicegerent wand
 With double potency of the black and white.
 Giver of Love, and Beauty, and Desire,
 The terror, and the loveliness, and purging,
 The deathfulness and lifefulness of fire!
 Samson's riddling meanings merging
 In thy twofold sceptre meet:
 Out of thy minatory might,
 Burning Lion, burning Lion,
 Comes the honey of all sweet,
 And out of thee, the eater, comes forth
 meat.

And though, by thine alternate breath,
 Every kiss thou dost inspire
 Echoeth
 Back from the windy vaultages of death;
 Yet thy clear warranty above
 Augurs the wings of death too must
 Occult reverberations stir of love
 Crescent and life incredible;
 That even the kisses of the just
 Go down not unresurgent to the dust.
 Yea, not a kiss which I have given,
 But shall triumph upon my lips in heaven,
 Or cling a shameful fungus there in hell.

Know'st thou me not, O Sun? Yea, well
 Thou know'st the ancient miracle,
 The children know'st of Zeus and May;
 And still thou teachest them, O splendid
 Brother,

To incarnate, the antique way,
 The truth which is their heritage from their
 Sire
 In sweet disguise of flesh from their sweet
 Mother.

My fingers thou hast taught to con
 Thy flame-chorded psalterion,
 Till I can translate into mortal wire —
 Till I can translate passing well —
 The heavenly harping harmony,
 Melodious, sealed, inaudible,
 Which makes the dulcet psalter of the
 world's desire.

Thou whisperest in the Moon's white ear,
 And she does whisper into mine, —

By night together, I and she —
 With her virgin voice divine,
 The things I cannot half so sweetly tell
 As she can sweetly speak, I sweetly hear.

By her, the Woman, does Earth live, O
 Lord,

Yet she for Earth, and both in thee.
 Light out of light!

Resplendent and prevailing Word
 Of the Unheard!

Not unto thee, great Image, not to thee
 Did the wise heathen bend an idle knee;
 And in an age of faith grown frore
 If I too shall adore,
 Be it accounted unto me
 A bright sciential idolatry!
 God has given thee visible thunders
 To utter thine apocalypse of wonder
 And what want I of prophecy,
 That at the sounding from thy station
 Of thy flagrant trumpet, see
 The seals that melt, the open revelation?
 Or who a God-persuading angel needs,
 That only heeds

The rhetoric of thy burning deeds?

Which but to sing, if it may be,

In worship-warranting moiety

So I would win

In such a song as hath within

A smouldering core of mystery,

Brimmed with nimbler meanings up

Than hasty Gideons in their hands may
 sup; —

Lo, my suit pleads

That thou, Isaian coal of fire,

Touch from yon altar my poor mouth's
 desire,

And the reluctant song take for thy sacred
 needs.

To thine own shape

Thou round'st the chrysolite of the grape,

Bind'st thy gold lightnings in his veins;

Thou storest the white garner of the rains.

Destroyer and preserver, thou

Who medicinest sickness, and to health

Art the unthankèd marrow of its wealth;

To those apparent sovereignties we bow

And bright appurtenances of thy brow!

Thy proper blood dost thou not give,

That Earth, the gusty Mænad, drink and
 dance?

Art thou not life of them that live?

Yea, in glad twinkling advent, thou dost
 dwell

Within our body as a tabernacle!

Thou bittest with thine ordinance

The jaws of Time, and thou dost mete

The unsustainable treading of his feet.

Thou to thy spousal universe

Art Husband, she thy Wife and Church;

Who in most dusk and vidual curch,

Her Lord being hence,
Keeps her cold sorrows by thy hearse.
The heavens renew their innocence
And morning state
But by thy sacrament communicate;
Their weeping night the symbol of our
prayers,

Our darkened search,
And sinful vigil desolate.
Yea, biune in imploring dumb,
Essential Heavens and corporal Earth
await;

The Spirit and the Bride say: Come!
Lo, of thy Magians I the least
Haste with my gold, my incenses and
myrrhs,

To thy desired epiphany, from the spiced
Regions and odorous of Song's traded East,
Thou, for the life of all that live
The victim daily born and sacrificed;
To whom the pinion of this longing verse
Beats but with fire which first thyself did
give,

To thee, O Sun—or is 't perchance, to
Christ?

Ay, if men say that on all high heaven's
face

The saintly signs I trace
Which round my stoled altars hold their
solemn place,

Amen, amen! For oh, how could it be,—
When I with winged feet had run
Through all the windy earth about,
Quested its secret of the sun,
And heard what thing the stars together
shout,—

I should not heed thereout
Consenting counsel won:—

"By this, O Singer, know we if thou see.
When men shall say to thee: Lo! Christ
is here,

When men shall say to thee: Lo! Christ
is there,

Believe them: yea, and this—then art thou
seer,

When all thy crying clear
Is but: Lo here! lo there!—ah me, lo
everywhere!"

TO DAISIES

[1897.]

AH, drops of gold in whitening flame
Burning, we know your lovely name—
Daisies, that little children pull!
Like all weak things, over the strong
Ye do not know your power for wrong,
And much abuse your feebleness.
Weak maids, with flutter of a dress,

Increase most heavy tyrannies;
And vengeance unto heaven cries
For multiplied injustice of dove-eyes.
Daisies, that little children pull,
As ye are weak, be merciful!
O hide your eyes! they are to me
Beautiful insupportably.
Or be but conscious ye are fair,
And I your loveliness could bear;
But, being fair so without art,
Ye vex the silted memories of my heart!

As a pale ghost yearning strays
With sundered gaze,
'Mid corporal presences that are
To it impalpable—such a bar
Sets you more distant than the morning-
star.

Such wonder is on you and amaze,
I look and marvel if I be
Indeed the phantom, or are ye?
The light is on your innocence
Which fell from me.
The fields ye still inhabit whence
My world-acquainted treading strays,
The country where I did commence;
And though ye shine to me so near,
So close to gross and visible sense,
Between us lies impassable year on year.
To other time and far-off place
Belongs your beauty: silent thus,
Though to others naught you tell,
To me your ranks are rumours
Of an ancient miracle.

Vain does my touch your petals graze,
I touch you not; and, though ye blossom
here,

Your roots are fast in alienated days.
Ye there are anchored, while Time's stream
Has swept me past them: your white ways
And infantile delights do seem
To look in on me like a face,
Dead and sweet, come back through dream,
With tears, because for old embrace
It has no arms. These hands did toy,
Children, with you when I was child,
And in each other's eyes we smiled:
Not yours, not yours the grievous-fair
Apparelling

With which you wet mine eyes; you wear,
Ah me, the garment of the grace
I wove you when I was a boy;
O mine, and not the year's, your stolen
Spring!

And since ye wear it,
Hide your sweet selves! I cannot bear it.
For, when ye break the cloven earth
With your young laughter and endearment,
No blossomy carillon 'tis of mirth
To me; I see my slaughtered joy
Bursting its cerement.

TO A SNOW-FLAKE

[1897.]

WHAT heart could have thought you?—
 Past our devisal
 (O filigree petal!)
 Fashioned so purely,
 Fragilely, surely,
 From what Paradisal
 Imagineless metal,
 Too costly for cost?
 Who hammered you, wrought you,
 From argentine vapour?—
 "God was my shaper.
 Passing surmised,
 He hammered, He wrought me,
 From curled silver vapour,
 To lust of His mind:—
 Thou could'st not have thought me!
 So purely, so palely,
 Tinily, surely,
 Mightily, frailly,
 Insculp'd and embossed,
 With His hammer of wind,
 And His graver of frost."

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

'IN NO STRANGE LAND'

[1913.]

O WORLD invisible, we view thee,
 O World intangible, we touch thee,
 O World unknowable, we know thee,
 Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
 The eagle plunge to find the air—
 That we ask of the stars in motion
 If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
 And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
 The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
 Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
 Turn but a stone and start a wing!
 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
 Cry,—and upon thy so sore loss
 Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
 Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing
 Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
 Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
 And lo, Christ walking on the water,
 Not of Genesareth, but Thames!

ENVOY

Go, songs, for ended is our brief, sweet
 play;
 Go, children of swift joy and tardy sor-
 row;
 And some are sung, and that was yester-
 day,
 And some unsung, and that may be to-
 morrow.

Go forth; and if it be o'er stony way,
 Old joy can lend what newer grief must
 borrow;
 And it was sweet, and that was yesterday,
 And sweet is sweet, though purchasèd
 with sorrow.

Go, songs, and come not back from your
 far way;
 And if men ask you why ye smile and
 sorrow,
 Tell them ye grieve, for your hearts know
 To-day,
 Tell them ye smile, for your eyes know
 To-morrow.

started in chains - save of power, -
In "Last Poems" - no 37 will last, says Lawes.
No 15 - "Eight o'clock"; of a man about to be hanged.

Power of repression!

A. E. HOUSMAN

[1859—]

Professor of Latin in Cambridge U.
most distinguished Latinist
today -
Most consistent critic
of fellow literati.

SELECTIONS FROM A SHROPSHIRE

LAD

[1896.]

IV

REVEILLE

WAKE: the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
"Who'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,
Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lads: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover:
Breath's a ware that will not keep
Up, lad: when the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

IX

On moonlit heath and lonesome bank
The sheep beside me graze;
And yon the gallows used to clank
Fast by the four cross ways.

A careless shepherd once would keep
The flocks by moonlight there,*
And high amongst the glimmering sheep
The dead man stood on air.

They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail:
The whistles blow forlorn,
And trains all night groan on the rail
To men that die at morn.

There sleeps in Shrewsbury jail tonight,
Or wakes, as may betide,
A better lad, if things went right,
Than most that sleep outside.

* Hanging in chains was called keeping sheep by moonlight.

And naked to the hangman's noose
The morning clocks will ring
A neck God made for other use
Than strangling in a string.

And sharp the link of life will snap,
And dead on air will stand
Heels that held up as straight a chap
As treads upon the land.

So here I'll watch the night and wait
To see the morning shine,
When he will hear the stroke of eight
And not the stroke of nine;

And wish my friend as sound a sleep
As lads' I did not know,
That shepherded the moonlit sheep
A hundred years ago.

XII

When I watch the living meet,
And the moving pageant file
Warm and breathing through the street
Where I lodge a little while,

If the heats of hate and lust
In the house of flesh are strong,
Let me mind the house of dust
Where my sojourn shall be long.

In the nation that is not
Nothing stands that stood before;
There revenges are forgot,
And the hater hates no more;

Lovers lying two and two
Ask not whom they sleep beside,
And the bridegroom all night through
Never turns him to the bride

XIII

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

XIX

TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

The time you won your town the race
 We chaired you through the market-place;
 Man and boy stood cheering by,
 And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
 Shoulder-high we bring you home,
 And set you at your threshold down,
 Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
 From fields where glory does not stay
 And early though the laurel grows
 It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
 Cannot see the record cut,
 And silence sounds no worse than cheers
 After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
 Of lads that wore their honours out,
 Runners whom renown outran
 And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
 The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
 And hold to the low lintel up
 The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
 Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
 And find unwithered on its curls
 The garland briefer than a girl's

XXI

BREDON* HILL

In summertime on Bredon
 The bells they sound so clear;
 Round both the shires they ring them
 In steeples far and near,
 A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
 My love and I would lie,
 And see the coloured counties,
 And hear the larks so high
 About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
 In valleys miles away:
 "Come all to church, good people;
 Good people, come and pray."
 But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer
 Among the springing thyme,
 "Oh, peal upon our wedding,
 And we will hear the chime,
 And come to church in time."

Pronounced Breedon.

But when the snows at Christmas
 On Bredon top were strown,
 My love rose up so early
 And stole out unbeknown
 And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
 Groom there was none to see,
 The mourners followed after,
 And so to church went she,
 And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
 And still the steeples hum.
 "Come all to church, good people," —
 Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
 I hear you, I will come.

XXIV

Say, lad, have you things to do?
 Quick then, while your day's at prime.
 Quick, and if 'tis work for two,
 Here am I, man: now's your time.

Send me now, and I shall go;
 Call me, I shall hear you call;
 Use me ere they lay me low
 Where a man's no use at all;

Ere the wholesome flesh decay,
 And the willing nerve be numb,
 And the lips lack breath to say,
 "No, my lad, I cannot come."

XXV

This time of year a twelvemonth past,
 When Fred and I would meet,
 We needs must jangle, till at last
 We fought and I was beat.

So then the summer fields about,
 Till rainy days began,
 Rose Harland on her Sundays out
 Walked with the better man.

The better man she walks with still,
 Though now 'tis not with Fred:
 A lad that lives and has his will
 Is worth a dozen dead.

Fred keeps the house all kinds of
 weather,
 And clay's the house he keeps;
 When Rose and I walk out together
 Stock-still lies Fred and sleeps.

XXVI

Along the field as we came by
 A year ago, my love and I,
 The aspen over stile and stone
 Was talking to itself alone.
 "Oh who are these that kiss and pass?
 A country lover and his lass;
 Two lovers looking to be wed;
 And time shall put them both to bed,
 But she shall lie with earth above,
 And he beside another love."

And sure enough beneath the tree
There walks another love with me,
And overhead the aspen heaves
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,
And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall sleep with clover clad,
And she beside another lad.

XXVII

"Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?"

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal

"Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

XXXIII

If truth in hearts that perish
Could move the powers on high,
I think the love I bear you
Should make you not to die.

Sure, sure, if stedfast meaning,
If single thought could save,
The world might end to-morrow,
You should not see the grave.

This long and sure-set liking,
This boundless will to please,
— Oh, you should live for ever
If there were help in these.

But now, since all is idle,
To this lost heart be kind,
Ere to a town you journey
Where friends are ill to find.

XLIII

THE IMMORTAL PART

When I meet the morning beam,
Or lay me down at night to dream,
I hear my bones within me say,
"Another night, another day.

"When shall this slough of sense be cast,
This dust of thoughts be laid at last,
The man of flesh and soul be slain
And the man of bone remain?

"This tongue that talks, these lungs that
shout,
These thews that hustle us about,
This brain that fills the skull with schemes,
And its humming hive of dreams, —

"These today are proud in power
And lord it in their little hour:
The immortal bones obey control
Of dying flesh and dying soul.

"'Tis long till eve and morn are gone:
Slow the endless night comes on,
And late to fulness grows the birth
That shall last as long as earth.

"Wanderers eastward, wanderers west,
Know you why you cannot rest?
'Tis that every mother's son
Travails with a skeleton.

"Lie down in the bed of dust;
Bear the fruit that bear you must;
Bring the eternal seed to light,
And morn is all the same as night.

"Rest you so from trouble sore,
Fear the heat o' the sun no more,
Nor the snowing winter wild,
Now you labor not with child.

"Empty vessel, garment cast,
We that wore you long shall last.
— Another night, another day."
So my bones within me say.

Therefore they shall do my will
Today while I am master still,
And flesh and soul, now both are strong,
Shall hale the sullen slaves along,

Before this fire of sense decay,
This smoke of thought blow clean away,
And leave with ancient night alone
The stedfast and enduring bone.

L

*Clunton and Clunbury,
Clungunford and Clun,
Are the quietest places
Under the sun.*

In valleys of springs of rivers,
By Ony and Teme and Clun,
The country for easy livers,
The quietest under the sun,

We still had sorrows to lighten,
One could not be always glad,
And lads knew trouble at Knighton
When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under,
In London, the town built ill,
'Tis sure small matter for wonder
If sorrow is with one still.

And if as a lad grows older
The troubles he bears are more,
He carries his griefs on a shoulder
That handselled them long before.

Where shall one halt to deliver
This luggage I'd lief set down?
Not Thames, not Teme is the river,
Nor London nor Knighton the town:

'Tis a long way further than Knighton,
A quieter place than Clun,
Where doomsday may thunder and lighten
And little 'twill matter to one.

LI

Loitering with a vacant eye
Along the Grecian gallery,
And brooding on my heavy ill,
I met a statue standing still.
Still in marble stone stood he,
And stedfastly he looked at me.
"Well met," I thought the look would say,
"We both were fashioned far away;
We neither knew, when we were young,
These Londoners we live among."

Still he stood and eyed me hard,
An earnest and a grave regard:
"What, lad, drooping with your lot?
I too would be where I am not.
I too survey that endless line
Of men whose thoughts are not as mine.
Years, ere you stood up from rest,
On my neck the collar prest;
Years, when you lay down your ill,
I shall stand and bear it still.
Courage, lad, 'tis not for long:
Stand, quit you like stone, be strong."

So I thought his look would say;
And light on me my trouble lay,
And I stept out in flesh and bone
Manful like the man of stone.

LII

Far in a western brookland
That bred me long ago
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time,
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to hearken
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: no more remembered
In fields where I was known,
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering weirs.

LIV

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

LV

Westward on the high-hilled plains
Where for me the world began,
Still, I think, in newer veins
Frets the changeless blood of man.

Now that other lads than I
Strip to bathe on Severn shore,
They, no help, for all they try,
Tread the mill I trod before.

There, when hueless is the west
And the darkness hushes wide,
Where the lad lies down to rest
Stands the troubled dream beside.

There, on thoughts that once were mine
Day looks down the eastern steep,
And the youth at morning shine
Makes the vow he will not keep.

LXI

HUGHLEY STEEPLE

The vane on Hughley steeple
Veers bright, a far-known sign,
And there lie Hughley people,
And there lie friends of mine.

Tall in their midst the tower
Divides the shade and sun,
And the clock strikes the hour
And tells the time to none.

To south the headstones cluster,
The sunny mounds lie thick;
The dead are more in muster
As Hughley than the quick.
North, for a soon-told number,
Chill graves the sexton delves,
And steeple-shadowed slumber
The slayers of themselves.

To north, to south, lie parted,
With Hughley tower above,
The kind, the single-hearted,
The lads I used to love.
And, south or north, 'tis only
A choice of friends one knows,
And I shall ne'er be lonely
Asleep with these or those.

LXIII

I hoed and trenched and weeded,
And took the flowers to fair:
I brought them home unheeded;
The hue was not the wear.

So up and down I sow them
For lads like me to find,
When I shall lie below them,
A dead man out of mind.

Some seed the birds devour,
And some the season mars,
But here and there will flower
The solitary stars,

And fields will yearly bear them
As light-leaved spring comes on,
And luckless lads will wear them
When I am dead and gone.

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Pretzel
San Salvador cathedral
Frank

